The Why and How of Dawah

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Preface

In the name of God, exceedingly Merciful, ever Merciful

Dawah is an Arabic word which means 'invitation'. But when used alone, it becomes an Islamic terminology, which stands for 'Invitation to Islam'. This is just as *Seerah* and *Sunnah* could respectively mean the 'biography' and 'practice' of any person, but when used alone, they are always understood to mean the biography and practice of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Man has been created by God Almighty, and he would return to Him after spending some time in this examination hall called *duniya*. Although ridiculously insignificant when it comes to its visibility on the timeline of man's actual existence- which extends from the creation of his soul thousands of years back to his eternal life in the hereafter- this small speck of time that he spends on earth becomes *the* factor that determines his eternity, just as a 3-hour entrance examination determines the future course of a young man's education and career.

In the 19th and 85th ayaat of Surah Aal'Imran, and then again in the 102nd, God has made it clear that He wouldn't settle for anything less than Islam (submission to His will). Islam thus becomes the most important asset that a man can carry with him to the hereafter. Devoid of Islam, man stands doomed for eternity. In His infinite mercy, in order to save man from this doom, God kept sending Books to the men He appointed as Prophets and Messengers in each and every community on earth. The last of these books is the Holy Qur'an, which has been revealed to His last and final messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for all mankind, till the end of time. Aided by the Holy Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ invited people to Islam till his last breath. But how would later generations receive this divine guidance? Through us. But why us? And how do we go about it? These are those questions that have led me to write this book- *The Why and How of Dawah*.

The first Section of this Book answers the first question, and the second Section answers the second. All attempts have been made to answer these questions with proper references from the Qur'an and Hadith, the Seerah and Sunnah. The first Section covers four inter-twined chapters, in which we discuss why Dawah is our responsibility as Muslims, what can befall us if we shirk this responsibility, till when are we expected to engage in this task, and why some people oppose Dawah work. This Section intends to provide an internal conviction to the dai (the one who invites people to Islam), allowing him to take up this task without any hesitation. Convinced thus, he can also then convince his friends and colleagues to join him in this noble cause.

The second Section explores the practical aspects of Dawah. How should a dai prepare himself for this task, what are the things that need to be kept in mind while interacting with non-Muslim brethren and how are we to reply to the questions most frequently asked about God and Islam. Right from Prophet Nooh to this digital age, the tools that have been employed to invite people to Islam have changed, but the core principles and etiquettes remain the same. Prophet Nooh, in the report he submits to God Almighty, says, ***"My Lord, I have indeed invited my people night and day. I have called out to them aloud; further, I have spoken to them in public and secretly in private."*** [Surah Nooh, ayaat 5, 8 and 9] A dai of our times might submit that 'I have used print, electronic and social media as best as I could, and I have spoken to them in seminars and corner meetings'. The world is changing so fast that we can't even predict what would be the tools of Dawah a few years hence. But the qualities that a person requires to become a good dai, and the etiquettes that he needs to honour, would not change. And just as swimming and cycling can never be learnt from a book, Dawah is learnt with experience, in the field. Every dai then develops his own style and methodology.

With these words, I hand over this book to you. The only intention behind writing this book is that it serves as a handbook to fellow dais, and gives me something to present before God when I stand before Him that day. Please pray that God accepts this humble endeavour in all His grace and makes it a means of salvation for me and every person who has contributed to this book in any and every manner.

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SECTION I

Why Dawah?

- **Our Responsibility**
- **What if we don't?**
- **When does this task end**
- **Misunderstandings about Dawah work**

Chapter 1
Our Responsibility

Inviting fellow human beings to Islam is our duty and moral responsibility. This chapter explores the various reasons why it is so.

The mission of all prophets

Calling people towards God has been the mission of each and every prophet. In fact, the words *nabi*, *rasool* and messenger literally mean someone who delivers a news or message. Be it Nooh or Ibraheem, Musa or Isa, Hud or Saleh, Shuaib or Lut, or Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself [May peace and blessings be on all the Messengers of God], they all preached the same message- Worship Allah, and follow us in doing so.

At several places in the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been categorically commanded to invite all mankind towards God in quite unambiguous words.

"Invite all to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching…."

[Surah anNahl, ayat 125]

"We have revealed to you the Qur'an so that you might remove mankind from darknesses and lead them to light, with the leave of their Lord, to His way who is Almighty and Praiseworthy."

[Surah Ibraheem, ayat 1]

The mission of the Ummah

Since there would no longer be any prophet in our midst till the last day, this responsibility of calling people towards God falls on our shoulders. This is the most important '*nabiyo wala kaam*' that we are all expected to fulfil.

In the 108th ayat of Surah Yusuf, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is commanded to proclaim, ***"This is my way. I invite to Allah with insight- I and those who follow me…."***
Thus, the task of inviting people to Allah is not only that of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; this task is also shared by those who follow him. When we claim to be followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, we also accept the burden of this task on our shoulders.

God praises those Muslims who discharge this prophetic duty. In the 33rd ayat of Surah alFussilat, He says, ***"And who is better in speech than one who invites people to Allah and performs good deeds, and says, 'Indeed, I am of those who bow in Islam'?"***

In the 104th ayat of Surah Aal'Imran, God urges the Muslims to give Dawah when He says, ***"Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who would attain success."*** In fact, what we come to understand from this ayat is that a Muslim can attain success if and only if he discharges this duty.

In his Hajj Sermon on Mt. Arafat, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had asked those present to convey the message of Islam to those who were not present there, adding that ***"for verily, it so happens that one to whom a message is conveyed will preserve it (i.e. understand and remember it with all its implications) more than he who conveys it"***. [Bukhari]

These are but a few references from the Qur'an and Hadith which tell us loud and clear that inviting to Islam is not the responsibility of prophets alone; it is the responsibility of every person who claims to be a Muslim and a follower of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The lives of the respectable Sahaba (May God be pleased with them all) and all righteous men who have walked this earth bear ample testimony to this undeniable fact.

Our Raison d'être

After calling upon Muslims to invite mankind towards God in the 104th ayat of Surah Aal'Imran, God, in the 110th ayat, informs us that inviting people towards God is our very purpose of creation, the very reason why we have been brought out. ***"You are the best people produced for mankind. You enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah….."***
We are the best people only because we enjoin right and forbid wrong while believing in God. If we cease to do so, we also cease to be the best of people. The purpose for which we have been created would then become futile. And if we return to God without fulfilling

the purpose for which we had been created, we would, in all probability, be held accountable before Him on the Day of Judgment.

A mark of generosity

When we have something beneficial with us, some news or information, the kind and generous ones amongst us would readily share it with others for the common good; only the miserly and stingy ones would keep that news and information to themselves. Let us say, for example, we receive a message about some job vacancy in a reputed company. Upon verifying its veracity, the first thing a kind person would do is share it with his friends and acquaintances or post it on some group, right?

This becomes all the more true when the news concerns a person's life and death. And even more essential when it concerns a person's eternal hereafter! We have the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with us. We have the key to Paradise and salvation, of divine forgiveness and ultimate success. We have Islam. Should we not share it with others? Or should we mimic the People of the Book and keep it hidden?
"And who is more unjust than one who conceals the testimony they have from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do." [Surah alBaqarah, ayat 140]

God instructs us to make the truth known to others:
"And do not conceal the truth deliberately." [Surah Baqarah, ayat 42]
The same has been repeated in Surah Aal'Imran, ayat 71

A mark of humanity

Suppose you are travelling by road and you notice a person riding his bike with his side-stand down. What would you do? Your conscience would take the lead and you would instinctively call him out and ask him to check his side-stand, right? Why? Because you fear he would trip and fall off his bike on the next turn. What is the worst that can happen if he trips and falls off? He would get injured. He would fracture a few bones. He would die. Can anything worse happen to him than death? No.

Every passing day we see hundreds of people worshipping idols and dying as disbelievers, as atheists, polytheists and pagans. We know that they could ultimately enter hell and rot therein forever. But our conscience does not flinch! Our heart does not call out to them to refrain from idol worship and turn to the one true God.

We seem to be more concerned about a person's well-being in this life than his well-being in the hereafter. Even if the biker survives that day, he would surely die on a later date; we all would. But if a person does not abstain from *shirk* and dies in that state, he would burn in hell forever! Should our humanity not get stirred in the latter case much more than the former?

Abu Hurairah narrates that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had said, ***"Verily, the example of myself and the people is that of a man who kindled a fire. When it lighted what was around it, moths and insects started falling into the fire. The man tried to pull them out, but they overcame him and rushed into it. I take hold of your waist-belts to keep you from falling in, yet you rush into it."*** [Bukhari and Muslim]
We ought to emulate our Prophet, shouldn't we?

A debt we owe

Friends, we are Muslims today because one or more Muslims had convinced us or our forefathers to renounce paganism and accept Islam. This is a debt we owe them. This debt cannot be paid off with money. The only way this debt can be paid off is by praying for those noble souls and passing on the baton they have handed us to others. In other words, we too should now convince other people who are submerged in *shirk* and paganism to renounce all false dogmas and enter the fold of Islam. This is the only way we would be able to free ourselves of this debt.

Chapter 2
What if we don't?

We have read in the previous chapter that inviting people to Islam is our responsibility, and we ought to contribute towards this task. We would now understand what can befall us if we fail to discharge this responsibility.

Lessons from the Qur'an

1. Surah alA'araf, ayaat 163-165

And ask them about the town that was by the sea - when they transgressed in [the matter of] the Sabbath - when their fish came to them openly on their Sabbath day, and the day they had no Sabbath they did not come to them. Thus did We try them because they were defiantly disobedient. And when a group among them said, "Why do you advise [or warn] a people whom Allah is about to destroy or to punish with a severe punishment?" They [the advisors] said, "To be absolved before your Lord and perhaps they may fear Him." And when they [i.e., those advised] forgot that by which they had been reminded, We saved those who had forbidden evil and seized those who wronged with a wretched punishment, because they were defiantly disobeying.

There are three groups of people here:
i. Those who sinned.
ii. Those who advised them against sinning and preached righteousness.
iii. Those who tried to dissuade the advisors from preaching righteousness.
But when God speaks of their end, He says that only the second group (that of the preachers of righteousness) was saved, while the wrongdoers were seized by a wretched punishment. It so implies that the wrongdoers who were punished included not only those who sinned, but also those who remained neutral and tried to dissuade the preachers from enjoining righteousness. This passage thus tells us that if we do not enjoin righteousness and advice people against sinning, we would be counted amongst the wrongdoers and we would invite

divine ire upon ourselves. The only way left for us is to preach righteousness and advise people against sinning. And as we all know, the greatest of all sins is *shirk* and paganism. If we don't invite people to monotheism and Islam, we would be wrongdoers and defiantly disobedient in Allah's sight.

This passage also tells us that our sole intention of engaging in Dawah work should be the welfare of humanity and the fear of accountability before God Almighty.

2. Surah alAsr

The passing time is witness to the fact that man is in complete loss, except those who have had faith and have done righteous deeds and advised each other to the truth and advised each other to sabr.

This Surah tells us that all men are in complete loss with the sole exception of those who have four qualities. Only people possessing all these four qualities would evade loss and stand a chance to qualify for Paradise. Enjoining others to follow the truth is one of those four prerequisites. If we shy away from doing this, we would not be able to save ourselves from certain doom.

3. Surah azZumar, ayaat 71-72

And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups until, when they reach it, its gates are opened and its keepers will say, "Did there not come to you messengers from yourselves, reciting to you the ayaat of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" They will say, "Yes, but the word [i.e., decree] of punishment has come into effect upon the disbelievers." [To them] it will be said, "Enter the gates of Hell to abide eternally therein, and wretched is the residence of the arrogant."

Whenever I read or listen to this passage, I imagine what if the people sentenced to hell were to give this reply: "We surely came across hundreds of Muslims in our life, they ate with us, stayed with us in the same society, transacted businesses with us, but not a single Muslim ever recited the ayaat of our Lord to us or warned us of the meeting of this Day"?

I then shudder to think what would befall us after this reply. Would we not be held accountable for dereliction of duty?

Lessons from aHadith

1. Huzaifah bin Yamaan narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, ***"By Him in Whose Hand is my life, undoubtedly you must enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, or else Allah will certainly send upon you a punishment, then you will supplicate to Him and He will not accept it".*** [Tirmizi]
This Hadith tells us that if we abandon Dawah, we would incur divine wrath and even our supplications would not be accepted.

2. Numan bin Bashir narrates that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, ***"The example of the person abiding by Allah's orders and restrictions and the one who is not, is like those who drew lots for their position in a ship. Some of them settled in the upper part and others in the lower. When those who were in the lower part needed water, they had to pass by those who were on the upper part. So they said, 'Let us make a hole in our part of the ship and save troubling those who are above us'. So, if the people in the upper part let them do what they intended, they would all perish. And if they stopped them with their hands, they would and all be saved".*** [Bukhari]
This is such a beautiful parable! If the people on the deck do not humble themselves and give water to those in the lower part of the ship, they would all perish. Likewise, if we do not mingle with our non-Muslim brethren and convey the message of Islam to them, they would certainly perish, and we would also perish with them.

3. Jaabir narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ***Allah Almighty commanded Gabriel to overturn a city with its inhabitants. Archangel Gabriel submitted, "O my Lord, amongst them is a slave of Yours who has never disobeyed You even to the blinking of an eye". Allah commanded Gabriel, "Overturn the city on him and on all the inhabitants, for his face did not ever change colour for a moment on my disobediences".*** [Mishkaat alMasabeeh]
This Hadith tells us that being a devout worshipper is not enough. Our heart should beat for the society. If evil is rampant in our society and we are least concerned about it, we would be counted as accomplices in the crime.

Lessons from History

Today, when Islamophobia has become so rampant that it has been normalized and institutionalized, when Muslims are being lynched and arrested, denied jobs and housing, and even ridiculed for what they wear and eat, the only viable solution in sight is Dawah.

Allow me to take you back to the Hijaz of 7th Century CE. When Islam was being preached in the cities of Makkah, Taif and Madinah, the preachers and followers of Islam faced untold persecution. They, too, were ridiculed, banished and killed. Tortured on the fiery sands of Makkah and put to the sword in Badr and Uhud. Tormented in Taif and besieged in the Battle of the Trench. Banished to the Valley of Abu Talib and scandalized in Madinah. What was the solution? Dawah! Was the table-turner of Uhud, Khalid bin Waleed defeated in battle or was Quraish's chief mediator Amr bin Aas? Was the lion-hearted Hamza forced to accept Islam or was the Ambassador of Quraish, Umar bin Khattab? These towering personalities and many many more were subdued by the spiritual power of Islam. It is true that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not spill blood at the Conquest of Makkah in 8 AH, but that is because he didn't have to. He and his companions (May Allah be pleased with them all) had spent the preceding twenty one years in winning over their enemies with their spotless character, kindness and moral values.

The worst catastrophe to have descended upon the Muslims was the Mongol invasion of 13th Century CE. There was none who could defeat them on the battlefield. But what eventually won them over was the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The same Mongols who had resolved to wipe out the Muslims became Muslims themselves. Dawah could achieve what decades of armed confrontations could not!

Dawah is the only way forward when the environment becomes Islamophobic to toxic levels. Dawah not only ensures our salvation in the hereafter, but also ensures our success and survival in this world. In his 1961 speech at Burma a year before the military coup of 1962, Maulana Ali Miyan Nadvi had made an impassioned appeal to Burmese Muslims to spread Islam in Burma in a do-or-die attempt to save themselves from eventual genocide. What befell the Rohingya Muslims in 2017 was a rude reminder of what happens when a community refrains from engaging in Dawah work.

Even today, when the odds are disproportionately heaped up against us, we need to fall back on the most powerful tool that we have, that anyone can possibly have - The Qur'an and Sunnah. We need to win over the hearts of our adversaries. Islamophobia has been cultivated in their minds by anti-Islam elements. We need to purge their minds of all that venomous brainwashing. They harbour several misgivings about Islam and Muslims, misgivings which are solely based on misconceptions, lack of knowledge and a fear of the unknown. We need to dispel all those misconceptions and misunderstandings. We need to tell them and show them what Islam really is. Many of them might consequently accept Islam, and the vast majority would at least shed their negative attitude towards Islam and become more tolerant and accommodative. For, while we do need Abu Bakrs and Umars and Usmans and Alis and Abdullah ibn Masoods and Khalid bin Waleeds in our ranks, we also need countless Abu Talibs to further our cause.

Chapter 3
When does this task end?

The above discussion makes it clear that Dawah is not only a collective responsibility of the Muslim Ummah, but also a task that each of us has been entrusted with on an individual basis. So the question that arises is: When would my task get over? Is there a deadline? When can I hang my boots? There are two replies to this question:

Till exhaustion

Tired, one day, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ returned home and sat down to get some much needed rest. That very moment, his foster son, Zaid, came in and informed him about a trade caravan which had entered Makkah, the bells of whose camels could be clearly heard. At once, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ got ready to meet them. Lady Khadijah intervened and submitted that he should take some rest now and he can meet the caravan later. At this, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ replied, 'O Khadijah, what if the caravan leaves before I can meet it? If they leave Makkah without being conveyed the message of Islam, how would I answer my Lord on the Day of Judgment?' and he left.

Likewise, in the 6th ayat of Surah alKahf, God tells Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, ***"So you would perhaps kill yourself grieving over them out of sorrow if they do not believe in this message!"***

The Qur'an and the Seerah are replete with such examples. What we learn from these is that we need to work till the point of exhaustion. We need to keep striving in this cause until our leaders and companions plead with us to slow down and take some rest. Have we reached that point yet?

Till Shuhada ala an'naas

"Thus We have made you an intermediate Ummah, so that you might be witness to the people, and the Messenger a witness to you…." [Surah alBaqarah, ayat 143]

The same thing has been said in the last ayat of Surah Hajj with some rephrasing.

We, as an Ummah, are the intermediate link between the Messenger ﷺ and all the people who would be born till the Last Day. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last and final Messenger of Allah till the end of time. But he was physically present and active only in the first half of the 7th Century. After him, it is we who have been entrusted with the task of carrying on with his mission and legacy. On the Day of Judgment, Prophet Muhammad would be called to testify for/against us, and we would be called to testify for/against the people.

Even towards the end of his mission, after toiling and striving for more than twenty years, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was warned in Surah alMaidah [ayat 67], ***"O Messenger! Proclaim the message which has been sent to you from your Lord. If you do not, you would not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission…."***

This burden of responsibility was so great and overpowering that at his Farewell Hajj, the Prophet sought the testimony of the hundred and twenty five thousand men and women who had gathered with him on the Plains of Arafat. ***He asked them, 'Have I conveyed to you the message of Islam?' Abu Bakrah narrates that we all replied, 'Yes'. He then raised his forefinger to the sky and called Allah to witness their testimony. 'O Allah, be witness', 'O Allah, be witness', 'O Allah, be witness'.*** [Bukhari]

Since we all share the same task, the same is expected from us as well. We need to ask ourselves, Am I in a position today to go to any part of the town I reside in and call the people to bear witness to the fact that I have conveyed the message of Islam to them and fulfilled my responsibility? And am I in a position to call Allah to witness the reply they would give me? If yes, Alhamdulillah. But if no, then our task is not yet done!

Chapter 4
Misunderstandings about Dawah work

Some people – especially Muslims – harbour reservations against Dawah work. In this chapter, I have tried to jot down their points of contention and explain how they don't hold much water.

It is a farz e kifayah

Some people cite the 104th ayat of Surah Aal'Imran that we have quoted in the first chapter to claim that Dawah is not mandatory upon each and every person; only a group of people suffices for this job or that it is the task of Ulema alone.

While this may be true for Muslim majority countries, where only a few Muslims can suffice for the entire non-Muslim population of their country, it is not at all true for a country like India. Muslims are only a 5th of the entire Indian population, and those who actually practice Islam with all consciousness are only few and far between. Scholars hence aver that ***'Let there arise out of you a group of people'*** would, in our country, comprise the entire conscious Muslim population. This duty falls on the shoulder of every Muslim who understands the importance of Dawah. The last line of the ayat, ***'It is they who would attain success'***, would also thus cover all these conscious Muslims who roll up their sleeves and enter the noble field of Dawah.

In our country, the task of Dawah would remain the responsibility of only a few amongst us only when Muslims outnumber non-Muslims, and that would only be possible if today we all engage in Dawah.

We need to first become ideal Muslims

Some people feel that for a person to invite people to Islam, he should first become an ideal Muslim himself. But this is not entirely true.

a. The Prophet ﷺ has said, ***'Convey, even if it is one ayat'***. He has also said that it is quite possible that the one to whom you convey the message practices it better than you.

b. When can a person claim that he has become a perfect Muslim? God says in the Qur'an [Surah anNajm, ayat 32], ***"Do not claim yourselves to be pure; He is most knowing of who fears Him"***. A Muslim can never claim to have perfected his faith. Even on his death bed, he would keep praying for guidance [as in Surah alFatihah, which he should compulsorily recite in prayer till his last breath]. What this essentially means is that the contending person would endlessly wait to become a perfect Muslim and would never begin the work of Dawah.

The truth is that Islam is an ideal point, towards which we are all trying to reach, in the footsteps of our guide and teacher ﷺ. We are ourselves pursuing that point and calling others (both Muslims and non-Muslims) towards that point.

We should indeed try to become as good Muslims as we possibly can. And as we shall learn in the next chapter, this is also necessary for a dai. But this quest for becoming a good Muslim should not impede our Dawah work; both go hand in hand.

We need to first reform Muslims

Some people point out that Muslims should first follow Islamic teachings before trying to convince others of the beauty of Islam. When Muslims themselves do not follow Islam as they should, when Muslims themselves are engrossed in sins and un-Islamic practices, they better set their own house in order before trying to preach others.

The reply to this argument, in addition to the one we have discussed above, is that we are putting in equal efforts on that front as well. This reply becomes all the more easier for a dai who is associated with an organization like Jamaat-e-Islami Hind or Students Islamic Organization (SIO) which has its work spread out in many avenues. We can then unapologetically claim that we have a Department dedicated to reform Muslims as well. The importance of reform in the Muslim community cannot be overemphasized, but that does not mean that Dawah should be kept on the backburner till then.

The Qur'an should not be given to non-Muslims

Some Muslims believe that the Qur'an should not be given to non-Muslims during Dawah work. To vindicate their argument, they cite the 77th to 79th ayaat of Surah alWaqiah, which say, ***"Indeed it is a Noble Qur'an, in a register well-protected, which can be touched by none except the purified."***

When this ayat was revealed, the Qur'an was not present in written form. These ayaat refer to the *register*, which is touched by none but the angels. 'The purified' mentioned here are thus the angels, not fellow human beings who have performed ablution.

Moreover, the etiquettes of touching the Qur'an in a state of ritual purity apply to Muslims, not to non-Muslims.

The Qur'an is not a book of Muslims per se. It is a book that belongs to all humanity. Every human being is equally entitled to touch it, read it, understand it and contemplate over it.

In India, for instance, where people do not understand Arabic, we can offer a translation of the Qur'an to non-Muslims, because the translation of the Qur'an does not hold the same status as the original Arabic Qur'an, and all the etiquettes of reading the Qur'an do not apply to the translation, even for Muslims. But in countries like Jordan or Syria or Egypt, where Arabic is the mother tongue and medium of education of even the non-Muslim populace, which translation would one give? Or would those people be kept deprived of the Qur'an itself?

Consider the following ayaat:

- ***"The Qur'an is a clear statement to all the people…"***

  [Surah Aal'Imran, ayat 138]

- ***"We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand, so is there any who would receive admonition?"***

  [Surah alQamar, ayaat 17,22,32,40]

- ***"The Qur'an is a reminder to the worlds."***

  [Surah Yusuf, ayat 104; Surah Saad, ayat 87; Surah alQalam, ayat 52]

- ***"Indeed, the Qur'an is the word of a noble Messenger. And it is not the word of a poet, little do you believe, nor the word of a soothsayer, little do you understand. It is but a revelation from the Lord of the worlds."***

[Surah alHaqqah, ayaat 40-43]

- ***"Do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon their hearts?"***

[Surah Muhammad, ayat 24]

Two things are very clear from the above ayaat (and many more similar ayaat which I have skipped for the sake of brevity):

1. The Qur'an is also addressed to non-Muslims; for them to read and study and ponder upon.
2. The "*Qur'an*" referred to in these ayaat is not some translation; it is the original Arabic text.

Some people contend that even pamphlets that bear the name of Allah and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ should not be given to non-Muslims, lest they dishonour it. You can remind them of the letter that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had written to the King of Persia. It reads:

In the name of God, exceedingly Merciful, ever Merciful

"From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Kisra, the great (leader/head) of the Persians. Peace be upon him, who seeks truth and expresses belief in Allah and in His Prophet and testifies that there is no god but Allah and that He has no partner, and who believes that Muhammad is His servant and Prophet. Under the Command of Allah, I invite you to Him. He has sent me for the guidance of all people so that I may warn them all of His wrath and may present the unbelievers with an ultimatum. Embrace Islam so that you may remain safe (in this life and the next). And if you refuse to accept Islam, you will be responsible for the sins of the Magi."

[Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. I, page 360; Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, pp. 295, 296; Tarikh-i Kamil, vol. II, page 81 and Biharul Anwar, vol. XX, page 389]

This letter was sent through Abdullah bin Hudhayfah Sahmi to the ruler of Bahrain, who was to deliver it to Kisra (Khosrow II). When the letter was read out to Kisra, he ripped it up saying, "A wretched slave among my subjects dares write his name before mine!"

Kisra did not only dishonour that letter, he actually tore it apart. But Prophet Muhammad still sent it to him, just as he sent letters to Alexandria, Bahrain, Abyssinia and Byzantine. This Prophetic example tells us that the guilt of dishonour lies on the one who dishonours it, not on the dai.

It is not safe in today's environment

This is not entirely true either.

The Constitution of India safeguards every citizen from being harmed because of his faith. Our Fundamental Rights have been listed under Part III of the Constitution, the fourth of which is the Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25-28).
Article 25: Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
Article 26: Freedom to manage religious affairs
Article 27: Freedom from paying taxes for the promotion of any particular religion
Article 28: Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions
Moreover,
Article 29, which falls under Cultural and Educational Rights, provides for Protection of Interests of Minorities.

The people here, too, are quite welcoming. A few elements notwithstanding, the overwhelming majority of this county is extremely tolerant and even appreciative of the message of Islam. This is something that every dai who has ever worked in the field would tell you.

And even if, for the sake of argument, it is accepted that the environment is not conducive enough, it does not in any way mean that Dawah work should be curtailed. Quite the contrary, actually. All the Prophets from Nooh to Ibraheem, Musa to Isa to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself, worked in hostile environments. This is the Sunnah of all the Prophets and Messengers. No one was welcomed with a red carpet and a bouquet in hand. We, on the other hand, are quite fortunate that the situations we face are nowhere as bad. If we buckle under a few sarcastic comments and some stern eyes, how are we to discharge our responsibilities? The Qur'an praises those who strive in the Way of Allah and are never afraid of the reproaches of those who criticize them. [Surah alMaidah, ayat 54] May Allah make us of them. Amen.

SECTION II

How Dawah?

- **Requisites of a Dai**
- **Etiquettes of Dawah**
- **FAQs and misconceptions about Islam**

Chapter 5
Requisites of a Dai

Every Muslim can be a Dai, but being a good Dai requires some effort. In this chapter, we shall discuss those qualities which a person needs to imbibe in order to efficiently give Dawah.

Conviction

The most important thing is that we should have complete faith and conviction in what we preach. We should have complete faith in Islam and all its constituent values and principles. If a person does not himself believe in what he is telling others, he would never be able to convince his audience. For instance, a person who believes in the Darwinian Theory of Evolution would never be able to convince his addressee that God created the first couple, Adam and Eve, as perfect human beings, and not as some apes or Neanderthals or Homo sapiens. This is why the Qur'an stresses upon the fact that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and all the Believers who are preaching Islam are themselves convinced of the truth thereof.
"The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the Believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers….." [Surah alBaqarah, ayat 285]

This conviction of faith needs to be developed by each one of us. We should keep working on our faith by being particular about our worship, doing ample zikr, reading and listening to the Qur'an and religious sermons and attending religious gatherings.

Confidence

Whatever we speak should be spoken with confidence. Our words should not betray any doubt; we should not be reluctant or hesitant. The prophets were very clear in their speech; they never used ambiguous words. The Qur'an asks Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to declare, ***"This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight (on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes), I and those who follow me….."*** [Surah Yusuf, ayat 108]

Our confidence is exuded by our tone and tenor, our body language, our eye movement, facial expressions, our handshake etc. Studies show that 93% of our message is conveyed by non-verbal communication. Only 7% of meaning is communicated through the spoken word; 38% is communicated through the tone of one's voice and 55% through body language.

This confidence would develop as we study Islam and come to realize how perfect it is, and the more experience we gain in the field of Dawah.

Sunnah

In the 125th ayat of Surah anNahl, God instructs Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to ***"Invite all to the way of your Lord with al-Hikmah"***. What is *hikmah*? The most commonly understood meaning of *hikmah* is wisdom, and we shall explore this in ample detail in the next chapter. But another meaning of *hikmah* is 'Sunnah'.

Consider the following ayaat:

i. ***"It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His ayaat, and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Hikmah…"*** [Surah Juma'a, ayat 2]

ii. ***"(O wives of the Prophet ﷺ) remember what is recited in your homes of the ayaat of Allah and the Hikmah…"*** [Surah alAhzab, ayat 34]

In both these ayaat, the thing that the Prophet ﷺ taught apart from the Book and ayaat of Allah was nothing but his Sunnah. Hence, certain exegetes of the Qur'an have suggested that the word *alHikmah* in these ayaat refer to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The 125th ayat of Surah anNahl would thus mean, *"Invite all to the way of your Lord with the Sunnah"*, which essentially means that the dai needs to act upon the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in order to become a successful dai.

Friends, when we go through the accounts of people who have accepted Islam, we find that in most cases, the thing that has brought them closer to Islam and impressed them has been the conduct of Muslims. You would find very few instances in which a person has been drawn to Islam merely by some literature or sermon. Even the very first reverts to Islam have the same story to tell. Until 6 AH, i.e. 19 years after the Prophet ﷺ commenced his mission, the number of Muslims did not exceed 2000. We know this because only 1400 Muslims had accompanied the Prophet ﷺ to Hudaibiyah. But just two years later, when Makkah was being taken, this number swelled to 10,000. And it took only two more years before the number of Muslims accompanying the Prophet ﷺ to Hajj rose to 125000. So what exactly happened after Hudaibiyah? How did the rate of people reverting to Islam increase exponentially? This unprecedented rise can be attributed to the fact that after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, non-Muslims began to frequent Madinah unhindered and could meet and converse with Muslims candidly. They could see for themselves the high moral character and value system of the Muslims, their lifestyle, their dealing and their conduct. It was this that impressed them more than anything else. The ayaat of the Qur'an, coupled with the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was a combination Arabia could not resist.

The most potent tool of Dawah is the personality of the dai himself. He needs to personify Islamic teachings. He needs to be a live model of the Islam he is preaching. He need to be an embodiment of the Qur'an and Sunnah. If that is left lacking, the most eloquent speeches would fall on deaf ears.

Abstention from Sin

A dai should always keep away from sin, especially the major ones. The burden and filth of sin would act as fetters and drag him backward. In the very initial days of his mission, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was told, **"And avoid *rujz*"** [Surah Muddaththir, ayat 5]. Scholars explain that *rujz* includes all forms of abominable and unclean thoughts, actions and ideas.

Spotless Character

The most valuable asset a dai has is his character. In the very initial days of his mission, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was also told, ***"And keep your garments free of stain"*** [Surah Muddaththir, ayat 4]. The Quraish hurled a number of abuses and engaged in vicious propaganda against Islam. They tried to discredit the Prophet by calling him a poet, a sorcerer and one possessed by jinn, but they could not point a single finger at his character. Even his staunchest enemy, Abu Sufiyan, when asked to describe the Prophet, could only speak kindly of him in the Byzantine court.

Imam Bukhari was also one of those persons who were very particular about maintaining a clean image, knowing too well that all his efforts would go in vain if his character is blemished. He was once travelling by boat, carrying a bag of 1000 gold coins. One of his fellow passengers happened to notice the bag and devised a plan to steal it. He raised a false alarm that he is missing a bag full of 1000 gold coins and suspects someone has stolen it from him. All the passengers were searched, but the bag could not be retrieved from any of them. Later, that person came up to Imam Bukhari and enquired about the matter. Imam Bukhari told him that he had stealthily thrown the bag overboard the moment he realized he could be accused of theft. He then explained, "Do you not know that I have spent my life collecting the aHadith of the Prophet ﷺ, and the world knows me as trustworthy? And that they trust me and take my aHadith? Do you want me to sell all of that for a thousand dinars?"

Ikhlaas

Sincerity of faith and intention is the key to successful Dawah. If a person has 100% ikhlaas, even a modest amount of knowledge would suffice. But if a person lacks in ikhlaas, even a truckload of knowledge would fail to turn the hearts of his addressees. We have had many successful dais in the history of the Ummah who were unlettered. The early martyrs of Islam like Musab bin Umair were not even privileged to go through the entire Qur'an, but their sheer ikhlaas had turned them into exemplary dais.

We need to keep introspecting on our ikhlaas and weed out any and every worldly intention that Satan keeps whispering into our hearts.

Knowledge

An expert dai should be well-read. Apart from *alHikmah*, the 125th ayat of Surah anNahl also mentions, ***'alMauizah alHasanah'*** which has been translated as 'good instruction' by Saheeh International and 'beautiful preaching' by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. It further reads, ***"and argue with them in a way that is best"***. Both these points require a thorough knowledge of the following disciplines:

a) Qur'an

Since the Qur'an is the most basic and fundamental Book of Islam, it is imperative that we should be well-versed with it. The Qur'an is a go-to handbook for Dawah. Believe me, the doubts and objections raised by the non-Muslims of 7th Century Arabia were no different than the ones raised today, and the replies that can dispel those doubts and convince them of the veracity of Islam today are also the same as they were in 7th Century CE. They have been recorded in the Qur'an, we only need to copy-paste them. The Qur'an is indeed a book for all eternity. In the 70th ayat of Surah alAn'am, God instructs us to ***"remind with the Qur'an"*** those who take religion as mere play and amusement and are deceived by the life of this world, lest people be given to destruction for what they have earned.

Also, many unscrupulous elements frame their own vile statements and attribute them to the Qur'an. We should have at least as much knowledge of the Qur'an that we can confidently assert that so-and-so sentence does not exist in the Qur'an at all. And if it has been quoted out of context, the dai should be acquainted with the context as well, so that he can set the record straight.

Last but not the least, when we offer copies of the Qur'an to non-Muslims, it is but expected that we should ourselves have studied it. Telling people that the Qur'an is the ultimate guidance for all mankind and the only means of our salvation, but not studying it ourselves, borders on the ludicrous. What if our addressee asks us why we have not studied the Qur'an if it is indeed so wonderful? Would we be left with any face to show him? The Qur'an rebukes such an attitude when it says, ***"Do you enjoin right conduct on the people but forget to practice it yourselves, while you recite the scripture? Then will you not reason?"*** [Surah alBaqarah, ayat 44]

b) Seerah

The Prophet ﷺ was a perfect human being. He is an exemplary model for everyone on earth. The more we learn about him, the better we can explain Islam to our fellow countrymen.

Also, since Prophet Muhammad was the best dai ever, there are plenty of things that we can personally learn from his Dawah approach.

One favourite target of our orientalist friends is the character and personal life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Hence, a thorough knowledge of Seerah is also indispensable for a good dai. And since he was also the ideal Muslim, any false accusation levelled against the Prophet has a direct bearing on the reputation and image of Islam and Muslims. We need to clear the air if someone tries to tarnish his image.

Books on Seerah should be studied in detail. They would not only help us in becoming better human beings, but also make us better dais.

c) Fiqh

Islamic family laws, civil laws and even criminal laws have long been the subject of negative propaganda by Orientalists. Hence, at least an elementary knowledge of Islamic fiqh is also required. Nikah, talaq, halalah, polygamy, veil, punishments for theft and zina and other such topics need to be studied in some detail. Please refer Chapter 7.

d) Contemporary issues

Every other day, something or the other keeps happening in our country and other parts of the world in which the Islamic perspective is brought into question. In every such instance, the dai should be able to convey Islam's stand on that topic. For this, he needs to remain abreast of whatever important is happening in the world and whatever is making news. In the very least, a dai cannot remain removed and oblivious of the world and the issues that occur therein.

e) Other religions

Since our addressees would most often be those who follow one of the many religions practiced on earth, we ought to know a thing or two about each major religion. We should try to gain knowledge about the books and ideologies of those religions which are practiced in our vicinity. Having zero knowledge of these religions makes it difficult for the dai to engage in a fruitful conversation with his addressee.

f) Languages

The Prophets have always preached in the language understood by the local populace.
In the 4th ayat of Surah Ibraheem, God says, ***"We did not send any messenger except to teach in the language of his own people, in order to make things clear to them."***
Following in their footsteps, we should also learn the local language and use it for our discourses and conversations with our non-Muslim brethren. This would not only make it

easier for them to understand what we wish to convey, it would also place them in a comfort zone with us and remove the cultural barriers that foreign languages create.

Humility

A dai should never speak haughtily or treat people with contempt. He should never adopt a 'holier than thou' attitude. Even the best of mankind, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not try to stand out from his followers. He called his followers Sahaba (which means companions), ate with them, walked with them, sat with them, to the point that strangers could never make out who among them was the Messenger of Allah.

The dialogues the prophets had with their addressees teach us how humble and self-effacing they were. In the 25th ayat of Surah Saba, God teaches them to speak thus, ***"You shall not be questioned as to our sins, nor shall we be questioned as to what you do"***. Notice here that the prophets use the word *jurm* or sin to refer to their own actions and the word *amaal* or deeds to refer to the actions of the disbelievers, when in reality it should have been just the opposite. Egos have no place in Dawah. A dai cannot afford to be arrogant or consider himself on a higher pedestal. A dai keeps reminding himself that he is as much in need of divine guidance and mercy as his addressee is.

Politeness

A dai should always be soft spoken. Even if he is on the right and the addressee is completely in the wrong, the dai should still speak calmly and softly to him, with the hope that God's message would somehow enter his heart.

Musa was one of the mightiest messengers of God, and Pharaoh was one of the cruellest rulers to have walked the earth. But when God sent Musa and Haroon to Pharaoh, He instructed them thus: ***"Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds. But speak to him mildly; perhaps he may be reminded or fear Allah."*** [Surah TaHa, ayaat 43 and 44]

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was one of the most soft-spoken people one could ever come across. And this quality of his was vital to the success of his mission. God says in the 159th ayat of Surah Aal'Imran, ***"It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. Had you been rude in speech or harsh by heart, they would have broken away from about you. So pass over their faults and ask for Allah's forgiveness for them…"***

Has Prophet Muhammad ﷺ not said that a man can achieve with kindness what he can never achieve while being harsh?

Sabr

As we have discussed in the concluding part of the last chapter, Dawah might not always be a bed of roses. Those who work in this field would have to face a number of hurdles and obstacles. What they need is Sabr. Allow me to quote a few ayaat in this regard, and we shall then discuss the various aspects of Sabr that are required in Dawah:

"You will surely be tried and tested in your possessions (loss of wealth and property/job/career) and your personal selves (molestation/injury/death), and you shall certainly hear much that will grieve you (sarcastic remarks, insults, character assassinations, trolling) from those who have received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if you take to Sabr and Taqwa, that is the prescribed thing to do."

[Surah Aal'Imran, ayat 186. Parentheses added for explanation]

"Who is better in speech than one who calls men to Allah, performs good deeds, and says, 'I am of those who bow in Islam'? Goodness and evil cannot be the same. Repel evil with what is better; thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity will become as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted this attitude except those who exercise Sabr, none but persons of the greatest good fortune. And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in Allah. He is indeed the one who hears and knows everything."

[Surah Fussilat, ayaat 33-36]

"O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and exercise Sabr over what befalls you; for that is the prescribed thing to do."

[Surah Luqman, ayat 17]

"For thy Lord, exercise Sabr."

[Surah alMuddaththir, ayat 7]

Sabr entails many things. Let us take them up one by one:

a) Patience

Dawah is often a long and tedious process. It might take an eternity for the addressee to finally appreciate what you are trying to preach. But you need to be patient and give him his time.

b) Perseverance

The dai should never give up on anyone. The Prophet ﷺ did not give up on Abu Talib till his last breath. He also did not give up on his staunchest opponents like Abu Sufiyan, Khalid bin Waleed, Amr bin Aas, Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, Suhail bin Amr and Hind. The dai needs to keep trying as much as he can and as long as he possibly can.

c) Determination

The dai should remain determined and steadfast against all odds. He should have complete faith in God and the promises made to the Ummah by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, that Islam would one day be established on this earth and its message would reach each and every hut and palace, regardless of how much the disbelievers might detest it. He should keep his sight fixed on divine rewards and the pleasure of Allah and His messenger, not on worldly obstacles.

d) Pragmatism

Sabr also means that we should not react to provocations and instigations. We should not allow our emotions to get the better of us. We need to be level-headed and pragmatic, we need to learn to restrain ourselves. We should respond to situations instead of reacting to them. Opponents of Islam try to provoke the dai to do something foolish. They would ask us leading questions, try to put words in our mouth. We need to be alert, we need to be smart.

e) Forbearance

We should be ready to bear insults and abuses. We should be ready to sacrifice our jobs, our comfort zones, our wealth and property, our health and even our lives and those of our loved ones for this Cause. We should learn from our Prophet ﷺ who replied to abuses with duas, who carried the luggage of that old lady without a word of complaint, who visited that woman who threw garbage on him when she fell ill.

f) Courage

Dawah is not for the chicken hearted. The dai should be bold and courageous, reposing his faith only in Allah, fearing only Allah. He is never afraid of the reproaches of those who criticize him [Surah alMaidah, ayat 54]. Musa stood before Pharaoh and Ibraheem stood before Nimrod, Isa stood before the Romans and the Pharisees and Prophet Muhammad took on the might of Arabia. May peace and blessings of Allah be on all His prophets and messengers. They are our role models, aren't they?

Taqwa

The 186th ayat of Surah Aal'Imran also mentions taqwa along with sabr. Taqwa, in this context, means that the dai should strictly abide by Islamic values and limits. He might have to hear the filthiest of languages, but he should always be courteous and polite. People might hit him and damage his belongings, but he should never retaliate in kind. He is in the field to please Allah and nothing else. So he should always do and say things that please Allah. Any deviation from taqwa is forbidden upon him. ***"When the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace'. And when they pass near ill-speech, they pass by with dignity."*** [Surah alFurqan, ayaat 63 and 72]

Tawakkul

The dai needs to repose his entire trust in God. His task is only to convey the message; bestowing guidance is the sole prerogative of God Almighty. A good dai does as best as he can and then relies upon God to make his Dawah successful. This attitude of tawakkul saves a dai from getting depressed; he does not fall into despair when he sees that his Dawah efforts are not bearing fruits or the results are not as fabulous as he had expected them to be. Tawakkul is the shield of a dai which he should never forsake. ***"This is exactly what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth"***, the Sahaba had said even when the combined forces of all Arabia had besieged their city, ***'and it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience'***. [Surah alAhzab, ayat 22]

In the concluding ayat of Surah atTaubah, God tells his Prophet ﷺ, ***But if the turn away, tell them, "Allah is sufficient for me. There is no ilah (deity and authority) other than Him. On Him I have relied (i.e. surrendered all my affairs), for He alone is the Lord of the Great Throne."***

Empathy

A dai should be the well-wisher of his people. He should genuinely feel concerned for their hereafter. His heart should bleed upon seeing his fellow countrymen submerged in *shirk* (associating others in divinity) and *kufr* (rejection). He should see his addressees just as a doctor sees his patients; he expends all his skills and resources against the disease while showing utmost love and care for his patient. A dai is also a spiritual healer; he should fight the satanic influences of atheism, agnosticism, hedonism, materialism, paganism and polytheism, but he should have utmost empathy for his addressee.

Passion

A person can never be a good dai if he does not have the passion to work in this field. The Prophet ﷺ was so eager to convey the message of Islam to mankind that God had to intervene and ask him not to wear himself off, that his duty is only to convey the message and nothing else, that their refusal to believe in this message would not be taken against him…. A perfect dai is one who loses his sleep and appetite in this work, he cares not for his own wellbeing and comfort, he is possessed by Dawah. And that is the mark of a true dai.

Dua and Tahajjud

Because it is God alone who can guide the hearts of the addressees to Islam, supplicating to God becomes an essential part of Dawah. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to fervently ask God to bless either of the two- Umar bin Khattab or Amr bin Hisham- with Islam. The Prophet's prayers were answered for Umar bin Khattab, who went on to become Ameerul Momineen Hazrat Umar Farooq, while the other regressed to the position of Abu Jahl.

The Prophet (and all believers by extension) have been instructed in the Qur'an: ***"So when you have finished (your duty on field), then stand up (for worship) and turn your attention to your Lord, and to Him direct your longing."***

[Surah ashSharh, ayaat 7 and 8]

Fieldwork and prayers go hand in hand, both complement each other.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to spend his nights crying for the Ummah. We too should wake up in the last part of the night and pray for our addressees. Tahajjud is an opportunity that a dai cannot afford to ignore. He should seek divine help in his task and beseech Allah to grant him the strength to fulfil his responsibilities, pour upon him Sabr, arm him with taqwa and tawakkul, bless him with knowledge and hikmah, put barakah in his efforts and graciously accept whatever little he could do in this Noble Cause.

Chapter 6
Etiquettes of Dawah

Since Dawah is all about human interaction, it is a very sensitive and tightrope task. There are some things which we should always keep in mind while interacting with our addressees. Let us discuss those Dawah Etiquettes in this chapter.

Addressee centric

One size does not fit all. Every person needs to be dealt with differently. The dai should have a fair idea about the level of education, profession, temperament, gender and religious affiliation of his addressee.

a. Level of education: An illiterate, uneducated and rustic person should be explained monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter in plain and simple language. But an educated person can appreciate the signs of Allah better than an uneducated person. God says in the 28th ayat of Surah Fatir, ***"Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge"***. An educated person can be told, for instance, about the scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an. We have plenty of examples of educated people who were drawn towards Islam when they found recently discovered facts of their respective disciplines mentioned 1500 years back in the Qur'an.

b. Profession: A dai can cite the wonders of Anatomy, Physiology, Embryology and Biochemistry to reason with a doctor about the existence of God. A linguist would readily appreciate the literary grandeur of the Qur'an. A French musician accepted Islam when he was overawed by the intricate harmony of Qur'an recitations. Similarly, the dai can cite fundamentals of Islamic law mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith to convince a lawyer that Islam is indeed divinely ordained. Ayaat on geology can likewise be shared with a geologist, those on bees and ants with entomologists, those on the universe with astronomers and so on and so forth.

When the person of that particular field is spoken in the language of his discipline, he at once grasps the message.

c. Temperament: If the dai has a fair idea of his addressee's strengths and weaknesses, his work becomes all the more easier. Do you know how Khalid bin Waleed accepted Islam?

Khalid had been hearing about Islam right from the time Islam began spreading in Makkah, but he did not pay any heed. It was only after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah that he began revisiting his attitude towards Islam. In the year 7 AH, the Muslims came to Makkah and performed their missed Umrah under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. But Khalid went into the mountains and stayed there until the Prophet and his companions departed. When he returned home, he found a letter left for him by his brother, Al-Waleed ibn Al-Waleed, who had accompanied the Prophet for Umrah. The letter read as follows:

"I am infinitely amazed at the fact that you continue to turn away from Islam when you are as intelligent as I know you to be. No one can be so blind to the truth of Islam. God's Messenger asked me about you, and said: 'Where is Khalid?' I said to him: 'God will bring him to us.' He said: 'A man of his calibre cannot remain ignorant of Islam. If he would use his intelligence and his experience for the Muslims against the idolaters, he would benefit from it a great deal. We would certainly give him precedence over others.' It is high time, brother, for you to make amends for the great benefits you have missed."

This letter tore down all the curtains of prejudice which had befogged his vision all those years. He thus decided to accept Islam and join the Prophet at Madinah.
[Details have been mentioned by Waqidi (alMaghazi 2/745-748) and Ibn Sa'ad 4/252]

d. Gender: There is an entire corpus of Qur'anic passages and aHadith which strike a chord with ladies. Women's rights in Islam - be it the right to life, education, respect, privacy, earn, inheritance, to have a say in marriage, *khula*, *meher* etc. - should be explained to ladies. The way in which Islam liberates women from abusive patriarchy, objectification and subjugation is seen as a breath of fresh air by many women around the world.

e. Religious affiliation: Buddhism and Jainism are atheist religions. They and other atheists and agnostics need to be convinced of the existence of God.

Jews and Christians recognize all the past prophets, essentially worship the same God and have a fair idea of the hereafter. So they need to be convinced of the authenticity of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Qur'an. Jafar bin Abu Talib's conversation with Negus of Abyssinia during the first Hijrat is a classic example of how one should speak to Christians.

All 'Hindus' are not the same. While passages from the Vedas and Gita can be cited while conversing with Suvarnas, those who have renounced Brahminism would never be convinced of Islam if they are told that 'the Vedas and Gita have mantras and shlokas that affirm monotheism'. The Avarnas are not too keen on scriptural details; what they instead seek is dignity and equality, love and respect.

The words we use are also important. The uninitiated might feel that *Swarg* is a synonym for *Jannah*, but the dai should be aware of the fact that in Hindu Mythology, *Swarg* is actually the abode of Indra and *Vaikunth* is the abode of Vishnu just as *Kailash* is the abode of Shiva. Similarly, we should avoid words like *Bhagwan*, *Devta* and *Parmeshwar* for Allah; *Ishwar* can be used instead. And words like *Awatar* should never be used to refer to prophets and messengers.

Ends do not justify the means

I was once attending a religious gathering in which the preacher was speaking on the bounties of God Almighty. I remember him saying, inter alia, that God is so bountiful that He causes warm milk to flow from the breasts of mothers in winters and refreshing cold milk in summers. While the other not-so-educated people in the audience swayed to calls of *SubhanAllah*, my friend sitting next to me did not take it kindly. He was a student of medical biotechnology, and he knew too well that milk always flows out at a constant body temperature of 37°C irrespective of whether the child is fed in the Arctic Circle or the Saharan Desert. While this might be a minor lapse on the part of the preacher, my friend became so disillusioned with the lecture that he stopped attending the gatherings of that particular *Jamaat* altogether.

Moral of the story: If we are inviting people to the true *deen*, the tools we employ should also be true. We should never employ fraudulent means to trick the addressee into believing in our message. Such a method is not only unethical, but it is also ineffective and eventually backfires.

Opportune moment

Hikmah is all about what to say and when to say it. Human beings are bound by their emotional state of mind. Sometimes they are happy, at other times they are sad, or worried, or anxious. Sometimes they are too preoccupied and busy, and at other times they are at leisure with a lot of time to spare. A good dai respects these variations in his addressee's mood and schedule. If the person is rushing to catch a train or getting late for his office, the dai at the railway station should not hold him back at his bookstall. He should seek an opportune moment to speak to him, when he would be more willing to give him an ear. Sad occasions like funerals and sickness, for instance, are times when people are more reflective and spiritual.

It should also be understood that the entire Dawah of Islam need not be given to every person on every occasion. It is quite possible that he must have met and would in the future meet many more Muslims; you are not the first or the last Muslim he is meeting. A person passes through many occasions of reflection and contemplation before he finally accepts the truth and embraces Islam. You might be the first of that chain of Muslims, or you might be the fifth or you might be the last of that chain on whose hands he finally recites his *Shahadah*. So we should concentrate on playing our part instead of rushing into it and making haste.

Cold calls

Explicit and overt Dawah need not be given every time you speak to an acquaintance. He should not feel intimidated or uncomfortable. At times, the dai can engage in just plain casual talk with no direct reference to Islamic teachings. If a dai brings in the topic of Islam every single time he meets or speaks with that particular person, the latter might feel that he is meeting him with an agenda, and might actually take offence. Dawah should appear natural. If he is an acquaintance, try to befriend him, allow him to open up to you, be a good listener, share his joys and sorrows. Your Dawah would be more fruitful and effective if he regards you as his friend and well-wisher.

Language

Try to learn and speak in the language of the addressee. On formal occasions and in certain academic institutions, speaking in English might prove more effective. If it is a mixed gathering, Hindi might be the best common denominator. Speaking chaste Urdu in front of villagers and deliberately refraining from using common Hindi or local words would make you an alien and your addressee would not be able to connect with you. That '*aamcha manus*' feeling is very vital to Dawah.

The 180th ayat of Surah alA'araf reads, ***"The most beautiful names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them. But shun such men as use profanity in his names: for what they do, they will soon be requited"***. When Persia was conquered, Caliph Umar was told that the Persians use the word *Khuda* for Allah. Since it came to be known that there was no profanity in that name, *Khuda* came to be accepted as a legitimate name of Allah. The same holds true for *God* and *Ishwar*. Allah is an Arabic word; if our Dawah conversation is not in Arabic, synonyms in other languages should be used.

If God blesses you with an opportunity to witness someone's *Shahadah*, that *Shahadah* should always be in the original Arabic language. The translation and meaning of the *Shahadah* should be explained to him, but only a translation does not suffice. The person accepting Islam should know for sure that it is 'Allah' he is referring to; synonyms can cause ambiguity, and there can be no room for ambiguity in such matters.

And needless to say, our language should never be crude or laced with expletives. We should be dignified in our speech as true ambassadors of Islam ought to be. This is especially true when the addressee resorts to verbal abuses and trolling; we should never abandon the moral high ground and reply in kind.

Attire

Within the parameters of what is permitted in Islam, our attire should be as welcoming as our language. Wear what your addressee wears and expects you to wear. So while a traditional kurta pyjama or sherwani can certainly be donned when the occasion permits you to do so, insisting upon it while delivering a Dawah lecture at a secular school or college might not be as productive. Students are accustomed to listening to teachers draped in formal wear. So wear formals. If you are addressing professionals or police officers, and you feel wearing formals would make them feel at ease, wear formals.

Caliph Ali had once lamented that people focus on *man qaula* (who is saying it) rather than *ma qaula* (what is being said). Changing this attitude would take time, and we can't wait as long. Once when our Imam was absent during *taraweeh* prayers and there was nobody to offer the gist of that evening's *taraweeh*, I volunteered to do so as I had read that day's part. Later, the feedback I received was that it did not rub well with the audience for the sole reason that I was wearing formals (because I was returning from my clinic). Lesson learnt, I now make sure that I dress up to the occasion- formals for lectures in educational institutions and professional meets, traditional wear with cap/turban while delivering sermons in the masjid and a decent sherwani when attending cultural programs organized by/for our non-Muslim brethren.

To cut a long story short, our attire should aid us in our Dawah work, and in the very least, it should not create barriers.

Win hearts, not arguments

There are two reasons why people engage in a debate or discussion. One is to bring out the truth of a matter and the second is to simply win the argument. Debates are held to win only in school and college competitions and in courtrooms. If a Dawah discussion seems to turn into an argument, it is best to disengage and continue the discussion on a later date. For, if he loses the argument, it would hurt his ego, in which case the dai might win the argument but he would lose that person. We are here to win hearts, not arguments. That is why the 125th ayat of Surah anNahl reads, ***"argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious"***. We should be ready to lose the day if we should, but we should never lose the person.

Say I don't know

If your addressee asks you a question whose answer you don't know, say you don't know. Never give vague answers. The dai should not be obsessed with salvaging his ego. He should appreciate the question and tell the addressee that he would ask an expert on that subject and get back to him in a day or two. He can take down his contact details. This would convince the addressee that he is being given due attention, and the dai also does not lose any face.

Imam Malik is one of the four leading jurists of Islam. People used to travel hundreds of miles to visit him and ask him questions on Islamic issues, seeking an edict. But it often so

happened that Imam Malik would humbly reply, "I do not know". Imam Malik never tried to make up a reply just to appear knowledgeable before the questioner, and this humility of his never marred his reputation or status either. If anything, it only served to grant him a status very few men in history have been able to attain.

Change the topic if ridiculed

If the addressee is not willing to hear you out and instead ridicules Islamic teachings and symbols, the dai should change the topic or leave the gathering.

The Qur'an is very explicit in this regard. In Makkah, the Muslims were instructed:
"And when you see those who engage in offensive and vain discourse concerning Our ayaat, then turn away from them until they turn to a different theme. And if Satan should make you forget, then after recollection, do not sit in the company of wrongdoing people." [Surah alAn'am, ayat 68]

The Qur'an reiterated this instruction in Madinah, calling it the trait of hypocrites.
"And it has already been revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the ayaat of Allah being held in defiance and ridicule, you are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme. For if you did, you would be like them. Allah would collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith- all in Hell." [Surah anNisa', ayat 140]

Evade traps

Some sly and cunning addressees ask leading questions to the dai and try to put words in his mouth. "So what you are trying to say is that…." Always think before replying. Never fall victim to such mind games. Make the rules, if you should. A dai should not be naïve enough to fall for such traps. He should be smart, he should be alert and he should weigh and measure his words well.

When Musa and Haroon were delivering God's message to Pharaoh, the latter tried to trap Musa in an uncomfortable question. But Musa cleverly evaded that question and resumed his Dawah. Have a look at this passage from Surah TaHa, ayaat 49-53:
Pharaoh asked them, "Who, then, O Musa, is the Lord of you two?"
He replied, "Our Lord is He who gave to each thing its form and nature, and further, gave it guidance".
Pharaoh then asked, "What then is the condition of former generations?"

(By asking this, Pharaoh wanted to stir up the courtiers against him. For, if Musa were to reply that devoid of guidance they would be in hell, the courtiers and all Coptic Egyptians would have taken offence and rejected him. But Musa could see through this trick)

He replied, "The knowledge of that is with my Lord, duly recorded. My Lord neither errs, nor forgets".

And after giving this short reply, Musa resumes his Dawah from where he had left.

"He, who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out, has enabled you to go about therein by roads and channels, and has sent down water from the sky".

In the 258th ayat of Surah alBaqarah, we are told that when Ibraheem was brought to Namrood's court, Namrood tried to impress upon Ibraheem that he was no less than God. When Ibraheem said that God grants life and death, Namrood killed an innocent man and freed another person who was sentenced to life to show that he too can give life and death. But despite the sheer absurdity of this reply, Ibraheem did not give a counter-reply; he simply took his Dawah forward and said that God causes the sun to rise from the east. If you are indeed divine, then make it rise from the west. At this, Namrood got confounded.

Do not insult their deities

In the 108th ayat of Surah alAn'am, the Qur'an instructs us "***not to insult those whom they worship besides Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance***".

Abdullah ibn Amr bin Aas narrates that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once said, ***"It is a major sin that a man slanders his parents." The Sahaba asked, "O Messenger of God! Could a person slander his own parents?" He replied, "Yes. If he slanders another person's parents, the latter in turn would slander his parents."*** [Muslim]

Our Dawah should always be positive. It should not be built on negativity. Islam is not true because other religions are false. What makes Islam true are its own inherent values. A dai should focus on those values, and not on the ills of other religions – their philosophy, their scriptures or their deities.

Stage debate

The readers might feel that the preceding sentence is inconsistent with some very renowned dais who routinely engage in calling out the faults in the belief systems and scriptures of other religions. So how are they right in doing so but we would be wrong in doing the same thing? The difference lies in the setting. Let me explain with an example.

Suppose there is a village in which some missionary workers go door to door and tell people to believe in Christ as their saviour. Now, if the Muslims are to counter their preaching, they can do so in two ways:

1) They can visit each and every household and tell them that what the missionaries told them was not true, and that the truth lies instead in Islam. This would then be countered by the missionaries, and again countered by the Muslims and the process would go on and on.
2) The Muslims can invite the leader of the Missionary for a debate in front of the villagers. The villagers can then decide who is right and who is wrong.

The Muslim preachers in question employ the second of these methods. They call the concerned priest on stage, debate with him and try to prove to the audience that the religious beliefs of the contending group are hollow and false. In order to do this, the Muslim preacher would point out mistakes in their scriptures and the logical and factual errors in their dogmas. The audience is also given an opportunity to ask questions to both preachers and have their doubts cleared. Since all this is done in an academic premise, it does not come under the purview of the ayat quoted above. However, criticizing and berating the religious beliefs of the addressee in a one-to-one Dawah setting is completely unacceptable and should be avoided at all costs.

Examples in the third person

Not only their deities, even the addressees themselves should not be reviled or insulted. While a good dai would never do so directly, we should be particular about not doing so indirectly as well. All examples, therefore, as a thumb rule, should always be given in the third person. Never say, “If you die in a state of *shirk* you would go to hell” or “What if your son calls every passer-by his father?” You can instead rephrase it and say, “A person who dies in a state of *shirk* would go to hell” and “What if a child calls every passer-by his father?” Using the second person pronoun is like targeting the addressee. He would feel intimidated and insulted. We should make it a habit to use third person pronouns to avoid insulting our addressees even unintentionally.

Quoting non-Muslim scriptures

When we get to know about passages from the Bible or Vedas or Gita which allude to monotheism or Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, we are tempted to quote them during our Dawah conversations with our non-Muslim brethren. But utmost caution should be exercised in doing so. As far as calling out mistakes in their religious texts is concerned, it should be avoided as much as possible. I have explained the reasons thereof in the preceding pages. As for those passages which confirm to monotheism and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and Islamic practices like animal sacrifice and prohibition of pork and interest, these should always be quoted as the last resort. Allow me to explain why….

i. Our Dawah should always be about Islam and the Qur'an. We should never try to prove the authenticity of Islamic principles with the help of those scriptures which we know and claim to have been corrupted over the years. Regarding a scripture as unauthentic and then selectively quoting from the same scripture to substantiate our argument is not the noblest thing to do.

ii. In a battle, if a group of soldiers happen to trap an enemy soldier, they never surround him on all sides; they leave an exit-way for him to escape. If the enemy is surrounded on all sides and denied any path of escape, the entrapped soldier, who knows he would be killed, would try to take down some soldiers before he eventually dies. But if a small passage is left open behind him, he would then focus on fleeing for his life, not on killing the soldiers who have trapped him. The same holds true in Dawah. When the dai begins the conversation by quoting the addressee's own scriptures, he essentially denies him anything to fall back upon. Left with nothing to base his argument on, the addressee then begins abusing Islam and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Qur'an, the guilt of which would ultimately fall on the dai himself.

Their scriptures should only be quoted when we have conveyed our message as best as we can but he still insists upon the legitimacy of his own scripture. It is then that we can safely quote his scripture and then calmly say that your scripture also says the same thing.

Quoting non-Muslim intellectuals

Many dais are also tempted to quote the remarks of famous non-Muslim personalities like George Bernard Shaw and M.K. Gandhi applauding Islam and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. But these should also be quoted sparingly. I concur with Maulana Abul Ala Maududi's views

on this matter, which were published in the Muharram 1352 AH/ May 1933 CE issue of Tarjumanul Qur'an. Here is a brief excerpt:

"It usually so happens that whenever a non-Muslim personality says something good about Islam, the Muslims spread it with immense pride as if Islam has received some validation certificate. It should, however, be kept in mind that Islam's authenticity does not stand in need of such certifications. Just as the brightness of the sun is not dependent upon someone calling the sun bright, and just as fire and water do not require anyone to certify their respective ability to burn and flow, so also Islam is not in need of anyone calling it genuine. The praise and acknowledgement of such people whose hearts do not concur with their tongues hold no value at all. These people are, in fact, countering their own praise and acknowledgement by refusing and refraining from accepting Islam. Had they actually been in awe of Islam's merits, they would have accepted it. But since they have refused to accept it despite praising it with their tongues, their case becomes similar to those who acknowledge the expertise of a doctor, justify the medicines he prescribes but get themselves treated by an unqualified quack. We Muslims should understand that the greatest of laurels heaped by non-Muslims hold no place of pride for Islam. There is only one thing that it prides upon, and that is: ***"The only deen in the sight of God is Islam"*** [Surah Aal' Imran ayat 19] and ***"I have approved for you Islam as deen"*** [Surah alMaidah ayat3].**"**

Responding to religious greetings and wishes

Muslims living in multi-religious cosmopolitan societies often find themselves in a difficult predicament during non-Muslim festivals. Since their colleagues wish them on Eid, they feel morally obliged to wish them back on festivals like Diwali, Holi and Christmas. But since these festivals have polytheistic connotations, it is inappropriate for Muslims to 'greet' them on these celebrations or wish them a 'Blessed' Christmas or Diwali 'Mubarak'.

If the person celebrating his festival wishes you in person or puts it up on the office or college social media group, and you are expected to reply back, then choose your words very cleverly. 'May God Almighty guide us all to light and success', 'May God Almighty grant us success and prosperity in both worlds' and other such similar messages can be posted in reply. Or if you deem appropriate, you can take the opportunity to explain the Islamic concept of monotheism to them.

Similarly, Muslim festivals and occasions can be used to explain the concepts of monotheism, prophethood, hereafter, sacrifice, gratitude, submission, divine guidance, the Qur'an, the life and message of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ etc.

Defending Muslim personalities

A dai is expected to convey and preach Islam, and Islam is nothing other than the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He should exhaust his time and effort in the defence of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and other messengers of Allah, for they were infallible. But he should not waste his time in defending other mortals. Orientalists try to corner Muslims by levelling charges against Muslim rulers like Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan. A dai should steer clear of these tricks and simply refuse to defend them. Muslim rulers and other personalities have to account before Allah, just like everyone else. Whatever they did in their lifetime- good or bad- they did it in their own personal capacities. Neither would we be asked about them nor would they be asked about us. Defend Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, we must; because what he said or did is an essential element of Islam. But the same privilege is not enjoyed by anyone else, not even the respected Sahaba, leave alone any religious preacher or king.

Chapter 7
FAQs and Misconceptions about Islam

Islamophobia has been cultivated in the minds of people to such an extent that the true message of Islam has been obscured. People at large have been taught things about Islam that are far removed from the truth. A dai is often confronted with questions from his addressees that betray the latter's exposure to Islamophobic content. Unless these doubts and misconceptions are dispelled, Dawah cannot commence. No matter how much the dai tries to convince his addressee about the inherent merits of Islam, he would still say, 'What you say does not concur with what I have been told about Islam. Is Islam not the same religion which….?' There can be many words that can fill this dotted line. I have jotted down some very common misconceptions about God, about Islam and about Muslims in this chapter. Let us see how we can reply to them.

No one has seen God/heaven/hell, so they don't exist

The most obvious reply to this objection is that 'absence of proof is not necessarily proof of absence'. Just because our five senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste cannot perceive God or the angels or heaven or hell, it does not imply that they do not exist. We cannot even see, hear and smell things some animals can. We have our limits, and we need to be humble enough to acknowledge that.

The second point is that these things relate to '*ghaib*' or the unseen realities of this universe. They cannot be demonstrated by empirical experiments in a laboratory. Even the Qur'an does not try to prove the existence of God or the hereafter. All it does is reply to questions of non-Muslims and shows man those signs which point towards the existence of God. Regarding God, the Qur'an asks man to ponder over his own self and look around him- the plants and animals, the sea and the skies. Does he not feel that all this has been created by a Higher Being?

The unbelievers retorted, 'How can we be created anew when we would be scattered like dust?' The Qur'an gives the following replies:

- ***They swear their strongest oaths by Allah, that Allah will not raise up those who die. Nay, but it is a promise binding on Him in truth, but most among mankind realise it not. They must be raised up so that He may manifest to them the truth of that wherein they differ, and that the rejecters of Truth may realise that they had indeed surrendered to falsehood.***

  [Surah anNahl, ayaat 38, 39]

- ***And they say, "What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up to be a new creation?" Tell them: "Be you stones or iron, or any created matter which, in your minds, is hardest to be raised up (yet you shall be raised up)". Then they will say, "Who will cause us to return?" Tell them, "He who created you first."***

  [Surah Bani Israil, ayaat 49-51]

- ***So observe the effects of the mercy of Allah- how He gives life to the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed, the same One will give life to the dead, and He is competent over all things.***

  [Surah Ruum, ayat 50]

- ***Man makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own origin and creation. He says, "Who can give life to dry and decomposed bones?" Tell them, "He will give them life who created them for the first time, for He is well-versed in every form of creation."***

  [Surah YaSeen, ayaat 78, 79]

- ***Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers!"***

  [Surah alQiyamah, ayaat 3, 4]

There are plenty of such ayaat in the Qur'an that tell man that he would be resurrected to meet God and account for his deeds, that it is easy for God to do so when it was He who had created him the first time when he was nothing; so creating him again should be easier. This needs to be done so that the righteous are rewarded for their faith and good deeds, and the unrighteous are punished for the sins they have committed.

Thus, a dai can explain God's undeniable competence in resurrecting man and the need for absolute justice to be delivered. So this answers whether resurrection is possible or not and why should the hereafter exist. As for a certain proof of God and the hereafter, that is not for man to obtain in this world, for then the entire concept of faith in the unseen would be rendered meaningless. The believers, by definition, are those who ***"Believe in the unseen… and who believe in the revelation sent to you and sent before you, and who are certain of the hereafter"***. [Surah alBaqarah, ayaat 3 and 4]

If a merciful God exists, why is there evil in this world?

God is indeed merciful, but the evil and corruption, the injustice and violence that we see around us are a direct result of our greed and hatred; God should not be held guilty for it. He has given us a free will and a free rein in this world- whether we use this free will to perform good deeds or bad ones is entirely our choice.

This life is an examination. Just as an invigilator, no matter how kind-hearted, would not suggest the right answer to the examinee, God also does not intervene in this examination. The teacher's job is to prepare his students for the examination. And God has done this perfectly well by sending Books and appointing prophets and messengers.

This world is plunged in miseries not because a merciful God does not exist, but because we human beings are not obeying the commands that He has revealed in the Qur'an; we are not following the Sunnah of His messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The day we all follow divine guidance, this world would become a much better place to live in. This guidance and the ensuing lifestyle is called Islam, and that is exactly what we invite you to.

Science tells us that man evolved from apes

Being a true atheist is not everyone's cup of tea. For, not only does an atheist have to deny God, he also has to come up with convoluted explanations to natural phenomena. You ask a religious person who created him, and pat comes the reply, 'God'. But since God has deliberately been kept out of the equation here, the atheist has to come up with exasperatingly elaborate theories to explain how life came into existence and how man was created, the most fascinating of which has been Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

In a nutshell, the Theory of Evolution postulates that single unicellular organisms like amoeba got formed first because of some random but a correct permutation and

combination of chemicals that led to the formation of protein chains. These simple organisms got differentiated into more complex ones and evolved into higher life forms by means of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This means that the best of fishes developed into amphibians and the best of amphibians developed into reptiles, the best of reptiles developed into mammals and birds and the best of mammals developed into human beings. Man, it assumes- or claims- evolved from apes.

This sinister theory not only devalues man by calling him a progeny of apes and helps promote materialism, racism and communism, it also falls apart on many scientific counts as well. Because of its flaws (that we shall discuss below), the Theory of Evolution still remains a *theory*, and it is for this reason that it has never been officially accepted as the scientific explanation to creation. The dai should say that he is opposed to the Theory of Evolution and believes in Intelligent Creation, not despite being a student of science but because he is a student of science! Allow me to explain why….

Protein chain formation:

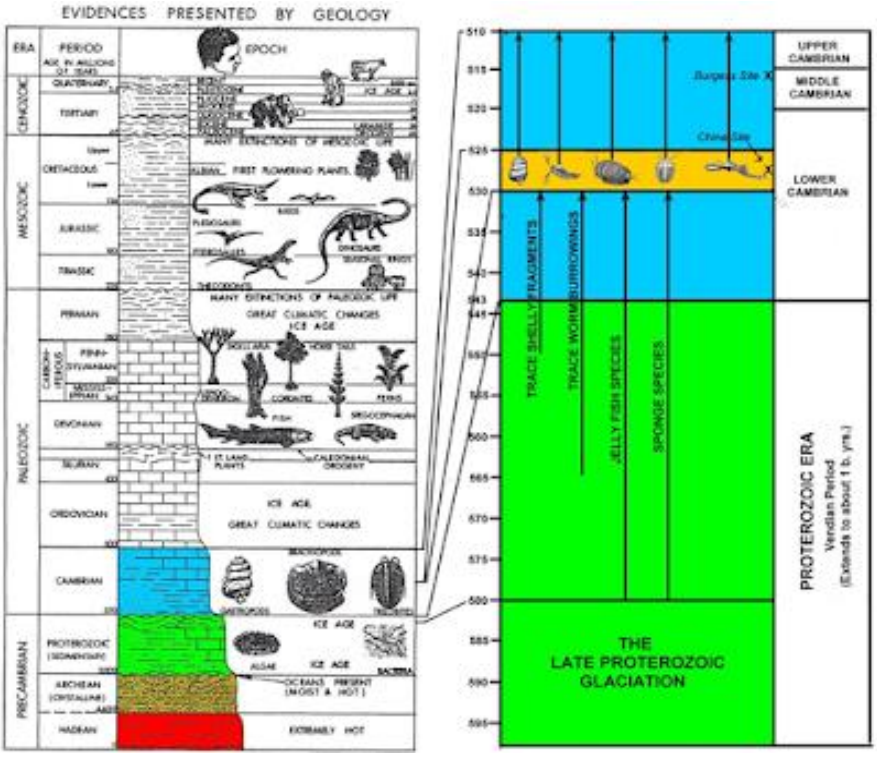
The theory believes that when the earth was still in its infancy four billion years ago, the forces of nature came together to make certain chemicals react randomly among each other. One such random chemical reaction led to the formation of a protein chain and eventually RNA.

First, a random permutation and combination of chemicals can never make a protein chain; it is way too complex a structure. A small change here or there renders the entire protein molecule waste. And even if such a perfect chain does get formed, would it not be acted upon by the very same forces of nature, and thus degenerate? Also, how can that protein chain replicate itself? Do lifeless chemicals self-replicate? We have not been able to achieve these results even in the controlled environment of a laboratory, let alone in an open pool of chemicals that are acted upon by forces of nature. The theory further assumes that these protein chains formed RNA and DNA structures and mitochondria and cell wall and ribosomes etc. etc. Again, even if a cell did get formed, how did it become alive and perpetuate life? The protagonists of this theory believe that all of this could have been possible, despite its infinitesimal probability. But tell them that it was God who designed these structures and gave them life, and they turn their faces away!

Genetics:

The genetic code stored in the DNA dictates the overall makeup of the body. Each species has its unique genetic code. This genetic code is not influenced by environmental factors. In other words, a need to adapt to the environment cannot alter the genetic code of a species. An antelope cannot become a giraffe by extending its neck to reach leaves of higher branches even after hundreds of generations. A fish just cannot become an amphibian. An ape simply cannot become a human being. They all have their own unique chromosomal structure. Mutations, if any, cannot make the organism better; they have always been harmful.

Palaeontology:

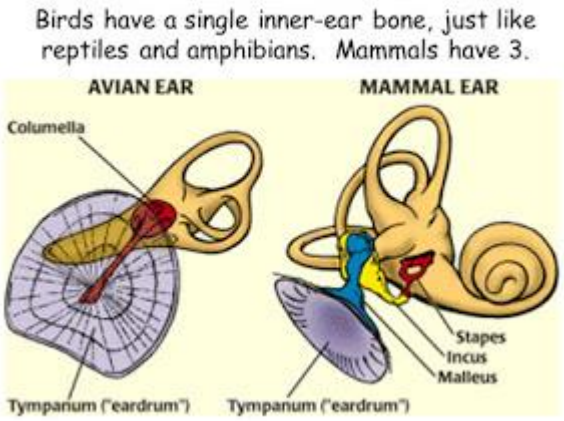


The Theory of Evolution says that, for instance, we had reptiles who reached out to the sky and the fittest of them developed wings and became birds some generations later. This was a gradual process, they say, and it took thousands of years to materialize. This means that between the geological layers containing fossils of reptiles and birds, we need a layer of those creatures that were half-reptile and half-bird in various stages of evolution. But these links are conspicuous by their absence. No half-reptile-half-bird or half-fish-half-amphibian or any such intermediary creature has ever been discovered- dead or alive. All the creatures that have ever been found are perfect specimens of their respective species. In every layer representing an age, a new species just crops up having no precursor, starting with the abrupt appearance of complex life forms in the Cambrian era. The diagram depicts just that. Even the Australopithecus, Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon fossils that have been found and adoringly been named Lucy, Jawa Man and Pekin Man are not human ancestors. They are either apes or modern human beings. Period.

Organ variation:

In the context of the evolution of organs, there is one particular example that has stuck with me. The ear of a reptile has a single bone, and the ear of a mammal has three bones- malleus, incus and stapes. Both ears are obviously functional. Now, if a reptile has to evolve into a mammal, this single-boned ear needs to become a three-boned ear. But this transition of ears would take several thousands of years, right? So for the intervening period of those thousands of years, in that transitional phase when the ear was evolving, the ear of that creature was maybe two boned or undeveloped three boned. But such a ear which

is neither perfectly one-boned nor yet completely three-boned would be a deaf ear- it cannot be functional. So this means that the creature evolved from a hearing animal to a deaf animal and then into a hearing animal again after thousands of years. But this goes against the theory of natural selection that the Theory of Evolution is based upon. How can a hearing creature evolve into a deaf creature and stay so for thousands of years? Should the hearing reptile not have prevailed over the deaf evolving reptile? It is another matter altogether that such a two-boned or underdeveloped three-boned ear-bearing creature has never been found in our fossils records.



This is just one such example. You can take the example of any other organ for that matter- the sophisticated eye, the multi-chambered heart of higher species v/s the single chambered ones of lower animals etc.

It should also be noted that it is not just one organ but the entire body that needs to undergo a metamorphosis. For instance, if a reptile has to change into a bird, it's not just the limbs that need to change into wings, the bones need to become hollow, the lungs need to change their structure, the breastbone needs to develop, the skin needs to cover itself with feathers. And all these changes have to occur simultaneously and all at once for the reptile to become a bird and indeed fly. But neither gradual evolution, nor mutation can explain this phenomenon.

Time taken:

The time taken for one species to (allegedly) evolve into the next species takes hundreds of thousands of years. So, this would mean that the time taken for an amoeba to develop into Homo sapiens sapiens (modern man) would run into millions of billions of years. But this is not possible, simply because the earth itself is not as old. The earth celebrated its first birthday four and a half billion years ago. The evolution from amoeba is itself said to have begun as recently as 800 million years back. You do the math.

These are strong scientific grounds for rejecting the Theory of Evolution. I have refrained from going into the details of these points for the sake of brevity. Many other laws like Physics' Second Law of Thermodynamics (Entropy) and Chemistry's Le Chatelier's Principle also refute this theory. For a detailed study, the reader is advised to refer to the book '*The Evolution Deceit*' (available online for free) by Turkish scholar, Haroon Yahya and other books on this topic.

Before concluding, the dai should also put across the actual manner in which species have been created. It is widely referred to as Intelligent Design.

Intelligent Design:

The concept of Intelligent Design states that man and all other species were created and designed by a supernatural intelligent power. In theological circles, we call this power God. Religious texts tell us that God created the first man (Adam) as a perfect modern human being from day one. He was not born to an ape. His progeny spread across the world and started forming communities and we are all his children.

"God created Adam from dust; then He said to him: 'Be' and he was."

[Surah Aal' Imran, ayat 59]

"I created (Adam) with My hands."

[Surah Saad ayat, 75]

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women."

[Surah anNisa', ayat 1]

"O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you? In whatever form He willed has He assembled you."

[Surah alInfitar, ayaat 6-8]

If you have any Darwinist friend, ask him if the disgust for God has made him relinquish science and truth as well? Is he willing to call himself the son of a chimpanzee but not the son of Adam? Why stoop so low? Open your eyes and discard your tainted glasses; you would at once see the hand of God all around.

The Qur'an commands Muslims to kill disbelievers

If any addressee tells you this, ask him back where he has read this. If he has not, then tell him that the Qur'an contains no passage which instructs Muslims to kill all disbelievers.

Alternatively,
If he mentions Surah alAnfal, explain to him the background of the Battle of Badr.
If he mentions Surah Aal'Imran, explain to him the background of the Battle of Uhud.
If he mentions Surah Hashr, explain to him the Expulsion of Banu Nazeer.
If he mentions Surah alAhzab, explain to him the background of the Battle of the Trench.
Likewise, if he mentions Surah alBaqarah or Surah Hajj or Surah Muhammad or any other Surah that mentions fighting, the dai should have a fair idea of the underlying context.

But in all probability, he would mention the first *ruku* of Surah atTaubah. In that case, explain to him the context of that *ruku*.

This *ruku* was revealed in the year 9AH, when Makkah was already taken and the State of Madinah was completely established. Whoever now revolted against the State was to be naturally considered a fugitive and tried for sedition. Such people, in modern parlance, would be termed Anti-nationals. They were given a four month notice period from the time of this declaration (ayat 2) to either surrender to the state - either by becoming Muslims (ayaat 5 and 11) or by offering a small tax called Jizya (ayat 29) - or to face the State's armed forces. Those who had treaties with the Muslims, their treaties were to be honoured till the term ended (ayat 4). Those who had violated their treaties, all treaty obligations with them were to be dissolved (ayat 1) and they were to be fought against (ayat 12). It should also be known that no fighting actually took place; the rebellion died down during those four months.

The ones quoting this passage conveniently skip ayat #6, which reads, ***"If any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who do not know."*** People usually join rebellions as part of mobs. They have no idea why they are fighting the State. The Muslims have been commanded to be kind and considerate towards such ignorant enemies, educate them and escort them to their own camps so that they can ponder over Islam without any fear or compulsion.

Our Non-Muslim brethren take offense at these ayaat because they feel these ayaat would be used against them. But that is nothing more than a misunderstanding. There are thousands of non-Muslims residing in Muslim majority countries right now in all peace and security. Since they are not rebels, there is no question of launching any offensive against

them. The 8th ayat of Surah alMumtahina clearly states: ***"Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and justly with those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, for Allah loves those who are just."***

This context makes it clear that the Qur'an does not give a clarion call to kill all *kuffar* and *mushrikeen* on earth. The dai can give an example from the Mahabharata here. Krishna convinces Arjun to kill his cousins. Does this mean that Hinduism instructs its followers to kill their cousins? No, absolutely not. That was said in a specific context. The ayaat of the Qur'an should also be read in their specific contexts.

God encourages Muslim soldiers to kill anti-social elements - here and elsewhere in the Qur'an - just as any army commander would encourage his soldiers to kill the enemy. If we support and feel proud of our national army when they fight fugitives and anti-social elements, there should be no reason why anyone should adopt an altogether different attitude here. Every nation on earth reserves the undisputed right to defend itself against internal and external threats, and even the Bible, the Ramayana and Mahabharata sanction the use of force to suppress and defeat such forces of evil.

Islam was spread by the sword/ Forced conversions

This misconception can be dispelled on several grounds:

a) The Qur'an does not allow for forced conversion.

"There is no compulsion in (the acceptance of Islam as the) religion; truth stands out clear from error."

[Surah alBaqarah, ayat 256]

"If they submit (in Islam), they are on right guidance. But if they turn away, then your duty is only to convey the message, and in Allah's sight are all His servants."

[Surah Aal'Imran, ayat 20]

"If it had been your Lord's will, they would all have believed- all who are on earth. Will you then compel mankind to believe against their will? No soul can believe except by the will of Allah…."

[Surah Yunus, ayaat 99 and 100]

"We know best what they say, and you are not one to overawe them by force. So admonish them with the Qur'an such as fear My warning."

[Surah Qaf, ayat 45]

b) People have never been forced to accept Islam all throughout history

History is witness to the fact that nobody was ever forced to renounce his faith and accept Islam. Whichever land the Muslims conquered, the people staying there were granted absolute liberty to continue following their religion. Non-Muslim citizens have been residing in countries ruled by Muslims right from 7th Century CE to date. Our country itself has seen centuries of Muslim rule. Had forced conversions been the norm, there would not have existed a single non-Muslim in India today. All the Muslim rulers did was allow Muslim preachers to propagate Islam in these lands in complete peace and security.

c) Islam went even where Muslim armies haven't

Islam has spread and Muslim nations have been established even on lands where no Muslim army ever set foot. Indonesia and Malaysia are classic examples. The first masjid to have been constructed in India, *Cheraman Jumah Masjid*, is located in Kerala. It was built as early as 629 CE. Islam had spread to these parts of the world by the agency of merchants, not armed soldiers. Islam is still rapidly spreading, particularly in the West. No Muslim army is converting people over there either.

d) It is not possible to change hearts by force

The primary reason why people should not be forced and were never forced to accept Islam is that they just cannot be forced to accept Islam. Accepting Islam is something that comes from the heart. Hearts cannot be changed at gunpoint or at the tip of someone's sword. Even if the person so threatened might utter words of Shahadah with his tongue, his heart would never accept it. On the contrary, he would grow more averse to it and teach his children to hate it. He would renounce it at the first opportunity and rebel against it. This holds true for any ideology, not only Islam. Ideas and ideologies just cannot be shoved down people's throats.

It can thus be concluded that the idea of 'Islam spread by the sword' is nothing but a myth and a propaganda. Yes, Muslim armies did conquer large swathes of land, but that was not to convert people to Islam; that was to overthrow cruel regimes and allow the people of those lands to breathe in the air of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice [Surah anNisa', ayat 75]. Those who grew fond of Islam accepted it of their own free will, and those who did not want to do so did not.

Jihad

Jihad means 'To exert one's utmost endeavour in furthering a cause'. Anyone who exhausts all his time, money, effort, skills and resources in pursuing something engages in Jihad, be it a student preparing for his examination, a merchant trying to sell his wares, a person overcoming his sinful temptations or a soldier trying to win a battle.

The Jihad referred to in Islamic literature is '*Jihad fi sabilillah*' which means Jihad in the Way of Allah, i.e. to exert one's utmost endeavour in furthering the cause of Islam. This can be by means of speech, writing, seminars, symposia, legislation, litigations, diplomatic channels and – if required – with arms. The motive of the Mujahideen in all these would be to establish peace and justice, with no ulterior motives or vested interests attached.

Branding acts of terrorism as Jihad is the product of Orientalist propaganda. It is quite amusing how propaganda determines our choice of words. Crusaders, who ransacked towns and burnt down cities, killed thousands and maimed more, have been glorified today in our vocabulary. A 'Crusader' today is one who takes up a noble cause and fights against corruption, child abuse, poverty, deforestation etc., while a 'Jihadist' today is evil personified. Ah! The irony.

So we have obscure terms being coined these days like Love Jihad and Education Jihad and Corona Jihad and what not! A lady accepting Islam and marrying a Muslim man of her choice is condemned as Love Jihad, Muslims pursuing education is called Education Jihad, and Muslims falling prey to the COVID-19 pandemic has been derided as Corona Jihad. Educated and wise men can see through this vile propaganda; it is alas the ignorant mobs that fall for it!

Islam promotes Terrorism

Terrorism is another word that is selectively used in today's world. Any act of aggression- legitimate or illegitimate- committed by a Muslim makes him a terrorist, whereas a non-Muslim going on a shooting spree is conveniently called 'a lone wolf', 'a mentally disturbed youth' or 'an emotionally charged young man'. Muslims are held collectively accountable for every act of terrorism on earth and made to apologetically condemn it. This is the effect of mass propaganda against Islam.

We still don't know if anything called the Indian Mujahideen even exists, nor do we know whose child the ISIS really is. But what we do know is that the worst carnages in human

history - the World Wars, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Pearl Harbour, the Holocaust, the Palestinian Nakba, Tiananmen Square, the killings of thousands by communists in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, and many more to count – were not perpetuated by Muslims. The US and NATO forces are carpet bombing the Middle East countries today, but no one has termed it Terrorism. Millions of Muslims have been butchered or rendered homeless in India and Myanmar and China with all impunity, but that too is not called terrorism!

Islam, in fact, literally means Peace. The Qur'an very explicitly says that ***"He who kills a single person is as if he has killed the entire mankind, and he who saves a single life is as if he has saved the life of the entire mankind."*** [Surah alMaidah, ayat 32] Terrorism has no place in Islam. No Muslim civilian can murder any person, irrespective of the latter's religion. It is only the Court of Law that reserves the authority to sentence a convict to death. Even the wars fought in Islam are bound by rules and conventions whereby protection is extended to the non-combatants, the women, the elderly, the children, the priests of all religions, the places of their worship, and even their crops and cattle. Only the combatants are killed, with utmost care taken to keep the number of casualties at a bare minimum.

What is the Shia-Sunni conflict all about?

The Shia-Sunni conflict began as a purely political one, which was later exploited by people with vested interests to divide the Muslim Ummah into sects.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not only a spiritual leader. By the time he passed away, he was also the ruler of almost all Arabia. When the question of succession came up, the vast majority chose Abu Bakr Siddiq as their Khalifa (successor to the Prophet), while a handful of people felt that Ali bin Abi Talib would have been more worthy of this post. Abu Bakr was succeeded by Umar bin Khattab, who was succeeded by Usman bin Affan. Ali bin Abi Talib swore allegiance to all these three Khulafa, but that small group of people backing Ali (who called themselves the party of Ali or Shiatul Ali, and hence Shia) always felt that Ali is being denied his due.

Just as religion is misused in our country to divide and rule, the Shia-Sunni political conflict was given religious colours to mobilize people one against another.

It should be noted that we do not have Shia-Sunni conflicts in India because that would not serve the interests of any political party. Here, we instead have Hindu-Muslim conflicts,

just as we have Whites v/s Blacks in the USA. Shia-Sunni conflicts are visible in the Middle East, because it is there that they serve political interests.

Shias and Sunnis both believe in Allah as the only God, the Qur'an as the divine scripture and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as their prophet. Both believe in the hereafter, the angels and destiny. Intermarriages are also common. Where they cannot generate any political mileage, the Shia-Sunni conflict is non-existent.

Islam accords second-class status to its non-Muslim citizenry (*Zimmis*)

In every new country that the Muslims went to govern, the local non-Muslim population was provided with all civil, cultural and religious rights, and the Muslim government was duty-bound to deliver these rights. A paltry tax called *Jizya* exempted the non-Muslim populace from enrolment in the armed forces. This *jizya* amount was usually even lesser than the *zakat* amount collected from Muslims. Far from being mere subjects of the Islamic state, the non-Muslim population was the *zimma* (responsibility) of the government, and hence called *Zimmis* (Urdu speakers would relate to the word *zimmedari*). If and when the Islamic government found itself incapable of extending this protection to its non-Muslim citizenry, it has returned the *jizya* collected from them, as in Hums. The Muslim army had to vacate the city of Hums in August 636 CE as they were being deployed at Yarmouk. But before vacating it, the army returned the entire *jizya* collected from the Christian citizens of that erstwhile Byzantine city. The citizens were so impressed with this fair gesture that they vowed to protect the city from their co-religionist Byzantines and prayed for the Muslims to come back and govern them.

Islam promotes Slavery

There are references to slaves and slavery in the Qur'an and Hadith, but that does not mean that Islam promotes slavery. Slavery already existed in 7th Century Arabia, and Islam only sought to raise the standard of slaves and grant them the dignity every human being deserves. Islam abolished the inhuman practice of kidnapping free men and selling them off as slaves. Only prisoners of war were enslaved. The Qur'an and Hadith have encouraged freeing of slaves as an act of immense virtue and as expiation and atonement for various sins. People were encouraged to treat their slaves like their brothers and feed and clothe them at par with what they themselves eat and wear. Slaves were no longer despised; they were offered equal civil rights and liberties. Some of the most celebrated jurists and religious scholars of Islam have come from slave families. History bears

testimony to the fact that not only were they offered high posts in governance but they were even rulers of certain Muslim states. If we study the 13th Century Sultanate of Delhi, we find that powerful kings like Sultan Qutubuddin Aibak (1206-1210 CE), Sultan Altamash (1211-1236 CE) and Sultan Gayasuddin Balban (1266-1286 CE) were all slaves who ruled vast swathes of India. Slave rulers were also dominant in Egypt from 1250 CE to 1517 CE.

Triple Talaq and Halalah

Popular media, including art and films, have misled men and women into believing that Muslim men unilaterally divorce their wives by uttering the word '*Talaq*' three times, making the wife helpless and homeless overnight with no social security or cover. To make things difficult, even Muslim men and women at large are clueless about the Islamic procedure of divorce. My experience at the Islamic Information Centre tells me that every person who is explained the Islamic procedure of divorce feels compelled to declare that there cannot be a better procedure for divorce.

Islam regards family as the basic unit of society. A strong family is vital to a strong society, while a weak and crumbled family structure undermines the very roots of the social framework. Hence, a family needs to be kept healthy at all costs. Divorce is not the rule, but the exception. Of all the permissible things in Islam, the most detestable in the sight of God is divorce. The Qur'an instructs man to be kind to his wife just as it instructs the wife to be dutiful towards her husband.
"Live with your wives in kindness. For if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike a thing, and Allah makes therein much good." [Surah anNisa', ayat 19]

But if the relationship between a married couple becomes so strained that it threatens their peace, that of their children and the peace of society at large, then divorce is provided as a valid vent. If the husband initiates the divorce, it is called *Talaq*, and if the wife initiates the divorce, it is called *Khula*, in which she approaches a *Qazi* and applies for the dissolution of her marriage. The *Qazi* hears out both parties and grants the divorce if he is convinced of its merits over the continuation of the marriage. This makes it clear that initiating divorce is not the sole prerogative of the husband; the wife is also entitled to initiate it, only the procedure differs.

The Qur'an lays down the steps that are to be taken in the event of a marital discord. Allow me to explain the entire procedure with the help of some flowcharts.

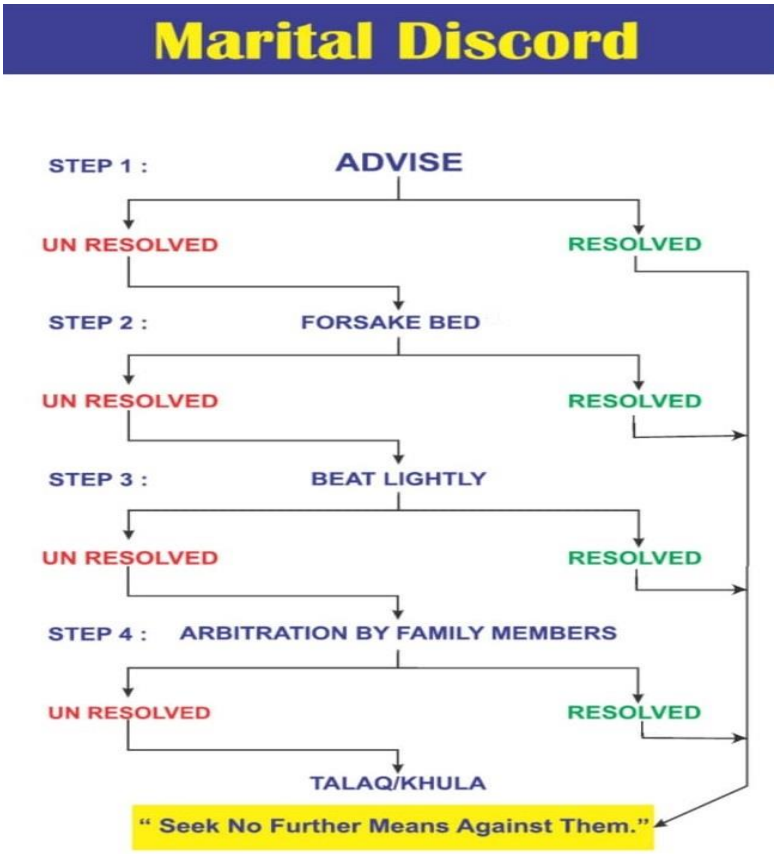
Let us begin with Surah anNisa'. There are four steps prescribed to resolve marital discords in ayaat 34 and 35.

In the 34th ayat, the husband has been told to:

1. Advise his wife. If this fails to resolve the issue,
2. Forsake her in bed, i.e. stay in separate rooms. If even this fails,
3. Beat her lightly to show your displeasure. Contemporary Egyptian scholar Abd al-Halim Abu Shaqqa refers to the opinions of jurists Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and al-Shawkani who state that this should only be done in extraordinary circumstances. Abu Shaqqa refers to the edict of Hanafi scholar al-Jassas (d. 981) who notes that the reprimand should be 'a non-violent tap with *siwak* (a small stick used to clean the teeth) or something similar'.

If the issue is resolved (by any of these steps), the husband has been instructed not to seek any means against her.

But if the issue remains unresolved and they are unable to solve their marital problems on their own, in the 35th ayat, the relatives have been told, ***"If you fear dissention between the two, appoint two arbitrators- one from his family and another from her family. If they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation, for Allah has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things."***



Talaq:

If all the four steps mentioned above fail to resolve their differences, the husband and wife are allowed to proceed for divorce.

The man has been asked to then sit with his wife - preferably in the presence of family members or other witnesses – and calmly tell her that we have tried everything we could to save this marriage, but we couldn't. So I pronounce Talaq. This would be uttered only ONCE.

This Talaq would be pronounced on a day when the wife is clean (not menstruating) and the couple has not had any sexual relations after her last periods. This means that if a man gets angry with his wife and decides to divorce her, he would have to wait till she gets her periods and then gets clean before he can pronounce Talaq.

There are two advantages here:
1. It buys time, during which his anger might subside and he might change his decision.
2. Because of hormonal disturbances, women have mood swings during their periods, and that is when fights usually take place. Any decision taken during these days can be hazardous.

Before proceeding further, readers are requested to study:
Surah alBaqarah ayaat 227-232
Surah atTalaq ayaat 1-7

The pronouncement of Talaq does not mean that the couple has undergone separation. They would continue to stay in the same house till the completion of *iddat* (three menstrual periods or, if pregnant, till the end of pregnancy. If the wife does not get periods because of menopause or any other reason, the *iddat* would be of three lunar months). During the *iddat*, the wife would neither be evicted from her marital house, nor would she herself leave. The couple would stay in the same house and the husband would look after her expenses as before. If they mend their relationship during this *iddat* (i.e. do *ruju*), they would continue to live as husband and wife, and no separation would take place. If the *iddat* lapses without any reconciliation, the separation would take place, and the *Talaq-e-Rajai* (revocable Talaq) would now become *Talaq-e-Bain* (binding Talaq). The husband would give her some parting gifts as per his financial capacity and see her off. The wife is now free from wedlock; she can marry another man.

Many people are oblivious of the fact that any such thing as a single Talaq even exists. Popular media has taught them that there can only be three Talaqs. The above discussion, however, makes it very

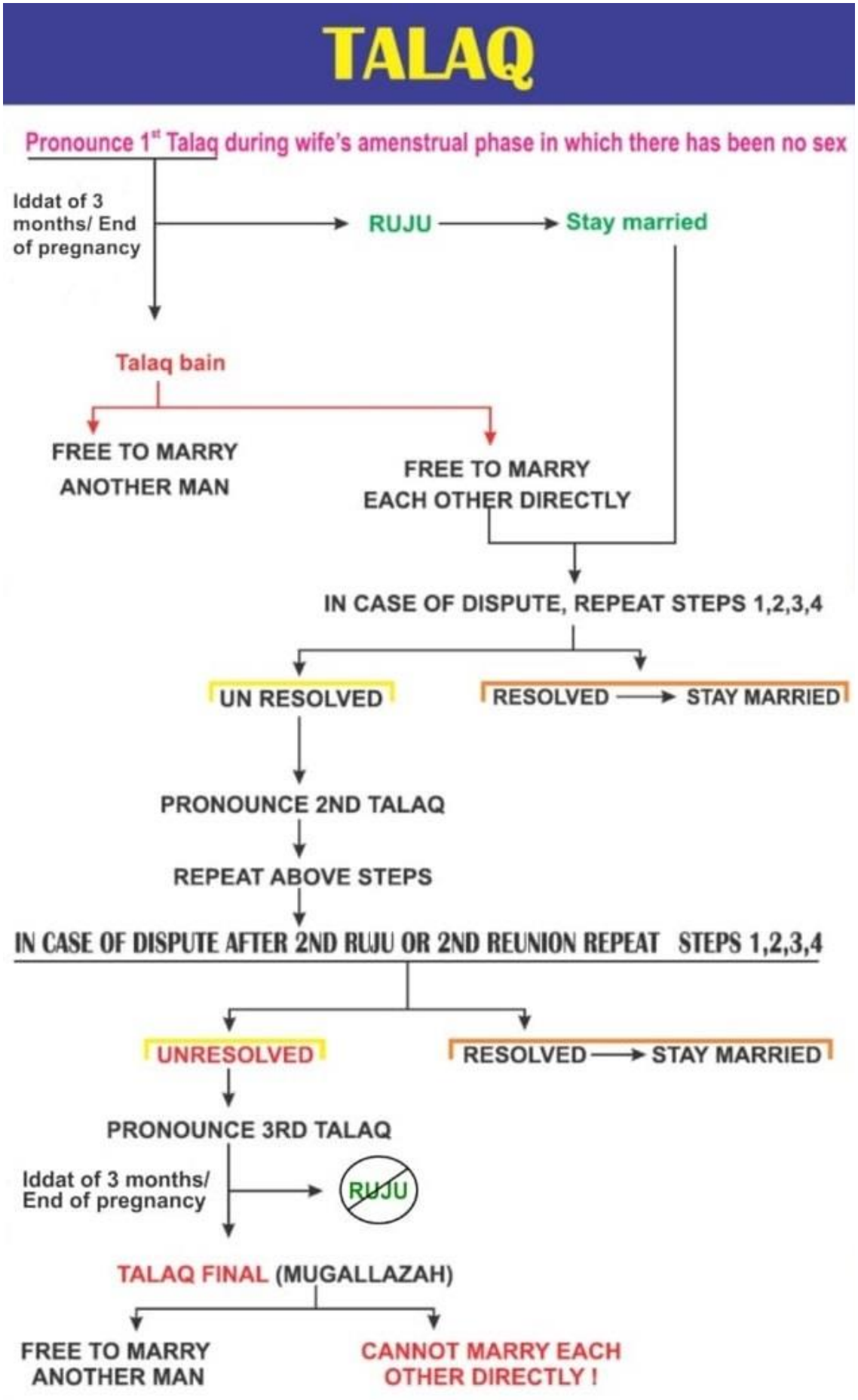
clear that the couple can separate and lead their own independent lives even after the first Talaq, without having to pronounce Talaq for the second or third time.

If the man and the lady, after separation, feel that they should not have separated, and the lady is not married to anyone else, they can again directly marry each other with the stipulation of a new *meher*.

Now, if the couple has mended their relationship during the *iddat* or they have remarried each other after the *iddat* has lapsed, and at some point of life again have a dispute which cannot be resolved by the steps mentioned in Surah anNisa' [first chart], the husband would once again pronounce Talaq once. This would be his second Talaq. The same steps would follow as for the first Talaq. [See second chart, on the next page]

This entire procedure can take place only twice between a couple. This is to ensure that divorce neither becomes a joke nor does it become a tool of mental torture which the husband would use to threaten his wife every other day. Since a revocable divorce is permissible only twice, the husband is expected to use this clause very cautiously and judiciously. The 4 steps of Surah anNisa' [first chart] can, albeit, take place *n* number of times. If the husband pronounces Talaq for the third time, the couple would no longer have any option of saving their marriage. The *iddat* would be observed, but there would not be any *ruju* (reconciliation). This is called *Talaq-e-Mugallazah* (final Talaq). The wife would be free from the wedlock after the *iddat* ends. She can now marry another man, but she is no longer allowed to marry her former husband. [See chart on next page]

It can very well be appreciated that this procedure saves marriages instead of granting instant divorces; and at the same time, it becomes easier for the couple to separate if they have no intention of reconciling with each other. Western law adopts such a skewed procedure for divorce, and the alimony the wife receives is at times so high, that people have discarded the institution of marriage altogether, leading to a complete collapse of the family system. On the other hand, some religions have made it almost impossible for couples to file for divorce; they continue to endure suffocating relationships without any succour whatsoever. Islam has carved out the balanced and middle path. It has discouraged divorces, but has also given couples the liberty to opt out of stifling relationships. At every step in this procedure, it allows the couple to reconcile with each other and give their marriage another chance. It neither burdens the man nor the lady. Utmost care has been taken to make the entire procedure as soothing as possible, providing for ample means of relief and rehabilitation for the man, the lady and also their children.


TALAQ
Pronounce 1st Talaq during wife's amenstrual phase in which there has been no sex
Iddat of 3 months/ End of pregnancy
RUJU
Stay married
Talaq bain
FREE TO MARRY ANOTHER MAN
FREE TO MARRY EACH OTHER DIRECTLY
IN CASE OF DISPUTE, REPEAT STEPS 1,2,3,4
UN RESOLVED
RESOLVED
STAY MARRIED
PRONOUNCE 2ND TALAQ
REPEAT ABOVE STEPS
IN CASE OF DISPUTE AFTER 2ND RUJU OR 2ND REUNION REPEAT STEPS 1,2,3,4
UNRESOLVED
RESOLVED
STAY MARRIED
PRONOUNCE 3RD TALAQ
Iddat of 3 months/ End of pregnancy
RUJU
TALAQ FINAL (MUGALLAZAH)
FREE TO MARRY ANOTHER MAN
CANNOT MARRY EACH OTHER DIRECTLY !

Triple Talaq:

Giving all three Talaqs in a single sitting (which is referred to as Triple Talaq these days) is called *Talaq-e-Bidat*. It is reprehensible in Islam because the man overrides all the provisions God had stipulated to mend relations and dissolves the marriage without following the procedures which could have saved his marriage. Triple Talaq is an injustice not only to the wife, but also to the husband pronouncing the Talaq, the kids and the society as a whole. The Muslim society needs to be educated about the proper method of Talaq enshrined in Islam (*Talalq-e-Ehsan,* which has been explained above) and cautioned against the demerits of *Talaq-e-Bidat*.

In 2019, the Parliament of India passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, criminalizing Triple Talaq. But it does not solve the problem; instead, it compounds it.

This new law that has been imposed upon Muslims says that if a man pronounces three divorces at once, it would be considered null and void (i.e. not even a single divorce would be counted) and he would be imprisoned for 3 years and he would have to financially support his wife during that time. Here are 10 reasons why this law is untenable:

1. It is against Islamic law. Although there is a difference in opinion as to whether 3 divorces pronounced at once would be considered 3 or 1, there is no difference over the fact that at least one divorce would have been pronounced. This new law ordains something that is absolutely against Islamic personal law, and hence an infringement upon our constitutional rights and privileges.

2. If the divorce is not to be implemented, then why is the husband being punished? Why is he being imprisoned for 3 years for a crime that has not been committed at all?

3. If the divorced wife lodges a complaint with the police against her husband, and the triple divorce is rendered null and void, would any self-respecting man continue to keep such a woman in his marriage? He was already unhappy with her when he had divorced her, and now you expect him to accept her as his wife even after the police complaint and imprisonment? How absurd!

4. Even if the law of the land has not registered the divorce, Islamic law definitely has. If the man and the woman continue to stay together as husband and wife even after the pronouncement of three divorces, it would be considered *zina* (extra marital relation), which is not only socially unacceptable, but also a sin.

5. Once the husband is behind bars, how would he financially support his wife?

6. If the triple divorce was not registered, he might as well divorce her again and financially support her only during her *iddat*.

7. Islamic law allows the woman to remarry immediately after completing the iddat of 3 monthly periods (or completion of pregnancy). If the divorce is not registered, she would still be considered his wife. So she would not be able to marry another man. And since the man who has divorced her won't take her back, she would not remain married either. She would remain abandoned with no one to take her in his marriage.

8. As we have discussed above, even a single divorce can lead to permanent separation. If the man does not want to retain his wife in marriage, he can do so with even a single pronouncement of divorce. Arguing that only Triple Talaq renders a woman a divorcee is not correct. Any divorce, in any community, in any part of the world makes a woman a divorcee and separates her from her husband.

9. Saying that the divorcee is a victim is also incorrect. Marriage, in Islam, is a social contract. And like all other contracts, this too can be ended. Islam lays down a systematic procedure for this with plenty of options for reconciliation and direct remarriage. If a person overrides those options and pronounces Triple Talaq, he is exhausting all those options in one go. This is why Triple Talaq is wrong, because he did not give his marriage a second chance. It is not wrong because it victimizes anyone.

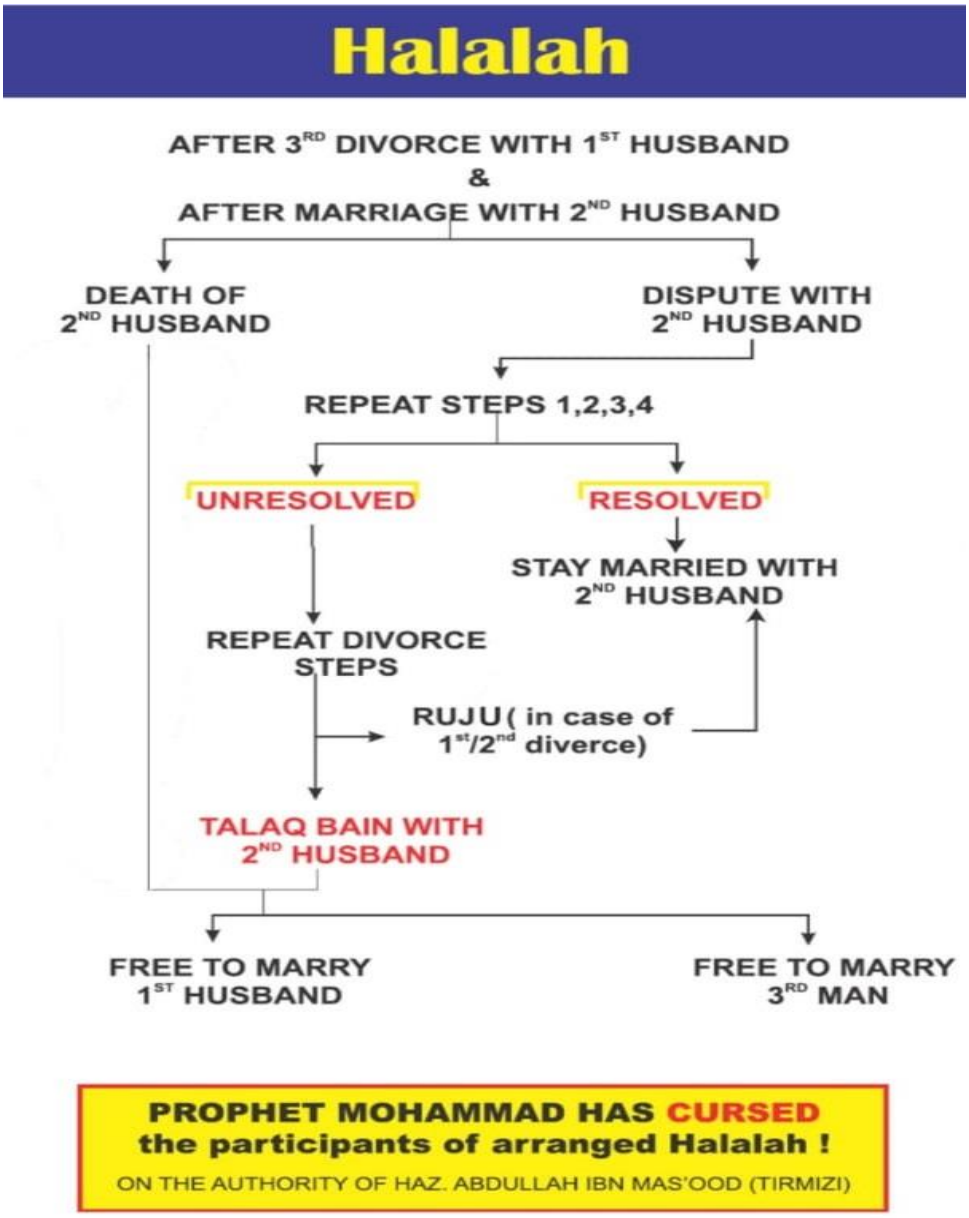
10. The above points refute the ostensible claim that this law is in the interest of women. Once a Triple Talaq has been pronounced, the woman no longer remains his wife. Any attempt to convict the husband would only compound the problem instead of solving it or providing any relief to the divorced wife.

Halalah:

We have learnt in the preceding pages that after the Third Talaq, the man cannot directly marry his ex-wife, as he could after the first and second Talaq.

The Qur'an says, ***"So if a husband divorces his wife (for the third time), he cannot, after that, re-marry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they re-unite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah. Such are the limits ordained by Allah, which He makes plain to those who understand."***

[Surah alBaqarah, ayat 230]


Halalah
AFTER 3RD DIVORCE WITH 1ST HUSBAND
&
AFTER MARRIAGE WITH 2ND HUSBAND
DEATH OF 2ND HUSBAND
DISPUTE WITH 2ND HUSBAND
REPEAT STEPS 1,2,3,4
UNRESOLVED
RESOLVED
STAY MARRIED WITH 2ND HUSBAND
REPEAT DIVORCE STEPS
RUJU (in case of 1st/2nd diverce)
TALAQ BAIN WITH 2ND HUSBAND
FREE TO MARRY 1ST HUSBAND
FREE TO MARRY 3RD MAN
PROPHET MOHAMMAD HAS CURSED
the participants of arranged Halalah !
ON THE AUTHORITY OF HAZ. ABDULLAH IBN MAS'OOD (TIRMIZI)

If the lady who has been divorced thrice marries another man, and if that marriage also gets annulled (i.e. either that man divorces her or he passes away), then she is now permitted to marry her first husband, or she can marry a third man, or she can remain unmarried. Because she is now permitted (halal) to marry her first husband, it is called Halalah. Halalah is by no means a procedure for remarriage after Triple Talaq. Those women who enter into a contract marriage with a man on condition that he would divorce her after consummation of the marriage so that she can remarry her first husband commit a grave sin. Imam Tirmizi quotes a Hadith on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ood that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has cursed the participants of such arranged Halalahs. Halalah as a natural process is completely legit, but an arranged Halalah has no place in Islam.

Polygamy and Population Explosion

Polygamy has always existed among practically all ancient cultures, and India is no exception. Indian mythology is replete with stories of polygamous kings, the most prominent of them being Dashrath and Krishna. Arab culture, too, was inherently polygamous. But Islam capped the number of wives a man could simultaneously have to four. The Qur'anic injunction concerning polygamy that we find in Surah anNisa' does not introduce polygamy; rather, it restricts it and makes it conditional. The man is obliged by law to treat all his wives equally. And if he cannot do so, he is required to marry only one woman.

Since the other ladies whom he would marry would necessarily marry him with their own free consent, there is no reason why any third person should have any problem with it. Societies which do not permit polygamy by law inadvertently promote promiscuity and licentiousness. The man then has multiple partners and extra marital affairs and live-in relationships, but he is not allowed to bring in a second lady home in the capacity of his rightful wife and give her all marital rights. As ridiculous as it may seem, in many 'developed and civilized' countries, having multiple partners is worn as a badge of honour while having a second wife is seen as an injustice unto women and the man who marries twice is liable to punishment.

There are many reasons why a man would want to have a second/third/fourth wife. Some of these are:

1. The wife is unable to bear a child. She might be barren, or she might be suffering from some infertility issues. The husband does not want to remain childless and forsake the desire of having children of his own.
2. The wife is suffering from some venereal disease and the gynaecologist asks the husband not to have sexual relations with her. The husband is naturally unable to rein in his sexual desires.
3. There is a widow with no one to look after her or her children in her maiden or marital home. She has to face psychological, emotional, familial, social, financial and moral issues. She is naturally unable to fulfil her sexual desires, with fear of insecurity, stigma, abuse, oppression and depression lurking around her- real or potential. No unmarried man is ready to marry her (which is understandable, and a social reality).
4. Many men have fallen on the battlefield in some battle or war, making the number of unmarried and widowed women disproportionately higher than that of surviving men.
5. A Syrian patient of mine who used to frequent India had one wife here and one wife in Syria, so that he does not remain deprived of family life in either country.

Does Polygamy among Muslims lead to an increase in Population?

1. First and foremost, let us clearly understand that almost all Indian Muslim men have ONLY ONE WIFE. A minuscule minority has two, and hardly anyone has three or four.
2. Increase in population is related to the fertility rate of women. A woman with more fertility bears more children. This fertility rate, obviously, is independent of the number of wives her husband has.
3. If a man has two wives, it is very highly probable that this is so because his first wife cannot bear children and he marries again to father a child.
4. The financial capacity of the family also plays an important role. A man (who is usually the earning member in a Muslim household) can fulfil the needs of only as many children as his monthly income permits. If, let us say, I earn Rs. 30,000 per month, and I can bear the expenses of a wife and two children, if I marry two ladies, I would still earn 30,000 and be able to bear the expenses of two children only. Additionally, I would also be required to support my second wife in the same 30,000. So I would try to have less children, not more. More wives does not mean more children! Instead, the contrary is true; a man with one wife would have more children than a man with more than one wife.
5. The population growth rate of Indian Muslims and Hindus is almost the same. Even if it is found to be more somewhere, it is because female foeticide is almost non-existent among Muslims; Muslims don't murder their daughters in the womb.

The dai should never be apologetic about polygamy or any other practice permitted by the Shariah. He should be a bold ambassador of Islam and confidently explain how the Shariah is indeed what it literally means, 'A path that leads to life-giving water'.

Purdah

Of late, the attire of Muslim women has been a hot topic of discussion in Western countries. Some European countries like France have also brought in legislation to ban the face veil. This sounds quite ironic given the fact that women covering themselves head to toe has been a part of traditional European culture too, just like it has been in all civilizations. It is also a paradox that while Muslim women wearing the *burqa* and *hijab* are pitied upon, Christian nuns wearing the same attire are looked upon with awe and respect. The West is known for its Islamophobic double standards, but Indians are also aping their way, despite the fact that the purdah system has been prevalent in India in the form of the *ghoonghat* since quite a few centuries.

At the turn of the 19th Century, women were made to work in the service sector under the garb of emancipation and financial liberation. They were taken away from the protective environment of their homes and made to serve strangers for a few shillings. They were required to dress scantily and objectified in advertisements, in newsrooms and reception desks. Their male colleagues, you might have noticed, wear multiple layered suits, but the womenfolk are required to wear knee length skirts. Even the cartoons kids watch show female characters scantily dressed. Even the dolls girls play with are half-naked. This culture of nudity is being promoted by popular media like arts and films too.

Guarding one's chastity:

The 59th ayat of Surah alAhzab reads, ***"O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their persons. That is more suitable, that they will be known and not molested. And Allah is oft-Forgiving, most Merciful."***

Women who observe proper Islamic dress code are recognized as women who wish to guard their chastity. This saves them from being molested by perverted men to a great degree. Women who take no effort at guarding their own chastity cannot expect to have their chastity guarded. After every case of rape and sexual assault, people often retort that the fault lies not in the woman's dress but in the lewdness of the men who molested her; it is they who should respect women and lower their gaze. Such people need to understand that decent men do not rape. Rapists are those men who are high on alcohol and pornography. Banning alcohol and pornography and all such avenues of indecency and promoting morality in society is all good, but we cannot afford to wait until society comes to respect moral values and the dignity of women. If our women are to be saved from getting molested, the first step would be to adopt all precautionary measures that are required to save women from getting molested, *purdah* being the first of those steps.

Subjugation:

People also feel that Muslim women are forced to observe the purdah against their own free will. This is not entirely true. I do not deny that our patriarchal society does hold influence on our women folk, but the vast majority of modern educated Muslim women are adopting the veil on their own. Even those women who come from families where the veil is not observed are strictly adhering to the veil, out of their own free will.

Restrictions:

Orientalists claim that the veil restricts women from receiving higher education and does not allow them to pursue a career. The truth is exactly the opposite. The very purpose of the veil is to allow Muslim women to venture out in complete security. She is absolutely

free to pursue the best of courses and the most rewarding of careers. The veil, in fact, becomes an enabler, not a restrictor.

Women not allowed inside the Masjid

This is nothing more than a myth. Women are allowed even in the holiest masjid of Islam, alMasjid alHaram of Makkah. Women are free to offer prayers in every masjid that can accommodate women in separate premises. Since small masajid do not have enough space, women cannot be accommodated there. Otherwise, almost all spacious masajid have room for ladies. I have personally seen women offering prayers in the masajid of Mumbai, Kashmir, Khuldabad, and of course, Makkah and Madinah.

The actual reason why people do not see women in the masjid so often is that women are not required to offer prayers in the masjid. They have the luxury of offering prayers in their own houses. Men, on the other hand, are required to offer all their obligatory prayers in the masjid if they have no valid excuse to the contrary. Moreover, men are not always at home. While out at work, the masjid becomes the most convenient place for men to offer their prayers, just as the house is the most convenient place for women to offer their prayers.

Marrying Cousins

Some people object to the fact that Muslim men marry their cousin sisters. Two things can be told if confronted with such an objection:

a. Muslim men are *not required* to marry their cousins. They are simply *allowed* to marry their cousins, just as they are allowed to marry women out of their circle of relatives. Those who marry their cousins do so only because they know them better than they can ever know strangers.
b. Every person is the cousin of every other person for that matter; we are all children of Adam and Eve. So every couple on earth is each other's cousin, right?

Muslims are uneducated and unhygienic

Muslims are by far the cleanest people on earth. Our religion requires us to clean our private parts every time we pass urine and stools, to wash our hands, face and feet before prayers, and have a complete bath after sexual intercourse/ejaculation. It is also desired of us to have a bath every Friday, to remain in a state of ritual purity all day and to regularly trim/shave our moustaches and the hair on our armpits and pubes. Muslim boys are circumcised soon after birth. We are expected to use a siwak (toothbrush) to clean our teeth and to rinse our mouths after every meal. We have been told by our Prophet ﷺ to always wear clean clothes and apply perfume, oil and comb our hair and always look neat and dignified. He has, in fact, told us that cleanliness is one half of our faith. So important is cleanliness in Islam, that the very first chapter in almost every book on Islamic jurisprudence is '*Taharah*', which means 'Cleanliness and Purification'.

As for education, let's just say that the very first word of the Qur'an that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was ***Iqra***, which means 'read'. It is true that the educational status of Indian Muslims is low, but that is not because they follow Islam. That is because most Indian Muslims are at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder, as is evident from the findings of the Sachar Committee and the Ranganath Misra Commission. This is primarily because it was the lower and backward castes of India that had mostly embraced Islam. Their condition was extremely pitiable because of the caste system; embracing Islam did not worsen it. On the contrary, they at least came to lead dignified lives.

After India gained independence, the educated cream of Muslim society migrated to Pakistan, leaving very few highly qualified Muslims here to counter state apathy and drive the socio-economic growth of Indian Muslims. But things are getting better now.

Azan is a nuisance factor

Some people have been made to believe that the azan recited from the masjid is a form of noise pollution. They ask why the azan is required today when everyone can look at their watches and come to the masjid on time.

In reply, the dai should first explain the meaning of the entire azan in local language. He should then proceed to tell his addressee that there is only one line in the entire azan which says 'Come to pray'. The rest of the azan, i.e. 'God is the greatest', 'I bear witness that none other than God is worthy of being worshipped', 'I also bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God' and 'Come to success' are words which serve to remind the

believers about God, about obedience to His Messenger, about success in the hereafter etc. These regular and timely reminders - early in the morning when people begin their day, at lunch time, at siesta, during market hours and before going to bed - help man assess his priorities in life and his devotion to God.

In any case, the melodious sound of the azan does not last more than 3-4 minutes. So there is no reason why it should be a nuisance to anyone.

Eating meat

Almost every community on earth (including India) consumes meat; there are very few that are purely vegetarian or vegan. However, Islamophobic elements in India usually target Muslims for being meat-eaters, especially during Eid ul Azha. Here I enlist some objections and their replies.

A life is wasted:

The sacrificial meat is not left to rot; it is consumed and distributed for free to the poor and deprived. Even the hide is donated for works of charity.

The Ghadimai Festival of Nepal can be cited in comparison where 2,00,000 animals, including 15,000 buffaloes are offered as *bali* to a goddess, and the carcasses are left to rot in the open.

Killing animals is a sin:

1. Islam allows killing animals only for food. Hunting them for game is prohibited.

2. Since humans are part of the food chain, it is not a sin for them to consume meat.

3. Just as animals have life, plants too have life, they too feel pain as demonstrated by J. C. Bose. If harvesting crops is not a sin, then slaughtering animals should also not be considered a sin.

4. Since it is usually Hindus who call it a sin, the following passages from their scriptures can be cited as a last resort:

- Law of Manu, Chapter 5, verse 30 says: …The eater can eat any creature that lives- even if he eats it every day. Our Creator made some creatures to eat, and some to be eaten.

- Law of Manu- Manusmriti- Chapter 5, verse 31 says: … If you eat in a sacrifice… it is a law of God.
- Manusmriti Chapter 5, verse 35: You can have meat.
- Rigveda, Book no.10, Hymn no. 16, verse no. 10: You can have meat.
- Rigveda, Book no.10, Hymn no. 85, verse no. 13: You can have meat.
- Mahabharata: Anushashan Parva Chapter 88, Bhishma gives advice to Hridhistar, and in Manusmriti Chapter 3 verse 266-272, it is mentioned that 'If you wish to please your ancestors, give them *bhog* of:
  - Herbs and shrubs… to please them for one month
  - Fish… 2 months
  - Venison (flesh of deer)… 3 months
  - Mutton… 4 months
  - Flesh of birds… 5 months
  - Goat meat… 6 months
  - Spotted deer… 7 months
  - Black antelope… 8 months
  - Cow… 1 year
  - Bull… 12 years
  - Rhinoceros and red meat of goat… they would be pleased forever.

Meat is not good for human beings:

Human bodies are, on the contrary, designed to digest meat. We have canine teeth that can chew meat and we have digestive enzymes which can digest meat. These would not have been present if we were not meant to consume meat. Moreover, certain essential nutrients like Vitamin B12 can only be obtained from animal sources.

The Islamic method of slaughter is barbaric:

The Islamic method of slaughter is in fact the most ethical. Here are a few highlights:

- Initiates Haemorrhagic shock cycle because of which all blood flows out. This makes the meat healthy to eat; retained blood can breed infectious organisms.
- Brain stops receiving oxygen. Hence, the animal feels no pain.
- Animal shivers because of rapid muscle contractions and relaxations, not because of pain.
- Other animals are kept away, lest they get mentally traumatized.
- Knife is supposed to be very sharp so that the procedure is as painless as possible.
- Procedure should be very quick.

Animal rights:

The above discussion makes it clear that no animal rights are infringed upon. But the murk lies deeper. Concern for animal rights is just a façade hiding their Islamophobic intent. It is quite amusing that some people become animal rights activists overnight at Eid ul Azha. All year long, when meat is served in restaurants around the world, when animals are killed for their skin, bones and ivory, when bee hives are destroyed for honey and when milk is taken from cattle, they raise not an eyebrow. But when animals are sacrificed by the Muslims on Eid to feed the poor, they at once have their conscience stirred.

Barbaric punishments for theft and zina

Some people find the Islamic punishments for theft and zina (extra-marital sex) quite barbaric. The Islamic punishment for theft is chopping off the hands of the convict. The punishment for fornication is a hundred lashes each. The punishment for adultery is death. A few points in this regard:

1. These punishments are severe because they act as deterrents. We therefore find that the crime rate in Muslim countries is a bare minimum when compared to those countries where the Islamic law is not enforced.
2. These punishments would be awarded only by a judge in a court of law after hearing both sides. The crime needs to be proven beyond doubt for a person to be sentenced. Otherwise, he is given the benefit of doubt and released.
3. These punishments would be carried out only when all avenues leading to sin have been closed. A fornicator and adulterer would not be punished when nudity and indecency is rampant in society, when prostitution and pornography are freely available and getting married has become a difficult task.
4. These punishments would not be carried out if the state is incapable of meeting the needs of the citizens and the convict was forced to commit the crime. For example, the hands of a person who steals food in a state of famine would not be severed because the state could not provide him with food and he was forced to steal. Caliph Umar had hence waived off the punishment for theft when Madinah was once gripped with famine.

People who accuse Islamic laws of being barbaric are mostly ignorant of these principles. We need to educate them on these points so that they develop a more nuanced and informed opinion.

Kaaba is an idol

When non-Muslims see pictures and videos of Muslims bowing and prostrating at alMasjid alHaram, they assume that Muslims are worshipping the Kaaba, and that the Kaaba is some idol. They also see Muslims kissing the *Hajr e Aswad* and conclude that it is also an idol.

They should be explained that the Kaaba is only a symbol and serves as a direction to which the Muslims turn for prayers. All Muslims all around the world thus pray towards the same direction, in concentric rows which begin at the Kaaba and extend outwards to cover the entire surface of the earth. This is a symbol of unity within the Ummah and an expression of *tauheed*. Muslims perform *tawaf* of the Kaaba to practically suggest that they worship only One God. All this is merely symbolic. Had the Kaaba actually been an object of worship, men would not have climbed upon it. It is respected and adored, yes; but it is not at all worshipped.

Those who claim that it is a Shiv-ling *astaghfirullah* should be told about the history of the Kaaba. How and why it was constructed, how it was renovated several times etc.

Bharat Mata and Vande Mataram

Some non-Muslims do not understand why Indian Muslims refuse to chant *Bharat Mata ki Jai*, when Bharat Mata is only another word for our motherland.

Islam does not stand in the way of one's patriotism. Love for one's fatherland/motherland/tribe is but natural. If a Muslim loves his country of origin, that is naturally expected of him. But chanting BMKJ is not patriotism, it is nation-worship (*desh bhakti*). For those who don't know, Bharat Mata is actually a deity, whose idol can be found in the Daulatabad Fort (and elsewhere). I have myself seen it, you must have too. Its picture is available on the internet for those who would like to see it.

Since Islam is strictly against idol worship and any kind of polytheism, Indian Muslims refuse to chant BMKJ.

The '*mataram*' in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's poem is Durga. Hence Indian Muslims refuse to chant that as well.

Yoga

I have been asked, "Yoga is just an exercise; so why are Muslims averse to it?"

The simple answer is that yoga is a ritual mentioned in the Vedas. It involves chanting mantras. Muslims are not averse to physical exercise, but that exercise should not be even remotely related to Vedic chants. Surya Namaskar, for instance, is an act of worshipping the sun.

Namaz also involves standing straight and bending forward and sitting and touching one's forehead to the ground. But does any Muslim offer namaz as an exercise? No. Fasting also has health benefits. But does any Muslim offer fasts for health purposes? No. Namaz and fasting are purely spiritual exercises, they are acts of worship.

Ask your addressee that if yoga is performed only for its health benefits, would he offer namaz five times a day and fast in Ramazan too?

Ghar Wapasi

Some people tell Muslims that since they (or their forefathers) had been Hindus, who were 'converted' to Islam, they should now renounce Islam and return to Hinduism, or leave the country. Prophet Shuaib was also told the same thing. In the 88th ayat of Surah alA'araf, God recounts their conversation: ***The arrogant leaders of his people said, "We will surely evict you, O Shuaib, and those who have believed with you from our city, or you must return to our religion". He exclaimed, "What! Even if we are unwilling?"***

So the first reply to the argument of Ghar Wapasi is what Prophet Shuaib had said, that we are very happy being Muslims and we detest returning to paganism and polytheism.

The second reply is that since we are all children of Adam and Eve, and since they were Muslims, it naturally follows that our forefathers and ancestors were actually Muslims. So if there's anyone who needs to return to their original religion, it is the non-Muslims, not the Muslims. Indian Muslims have already reverted to the original natural religion of mankind, Islam. So should they.

Jesus is divine as he was born without a father

Simply quote the 59th ayat of Surah Aal'Imran. ***"The similitude of Isa before Allah is like that of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, 'Be', and he was."*** If Isa is divine because he was born without a father, Adam should be greater in divinity because he was born without both parents. But nobody has ever claimed that Adam is divine.

The truth is that Isa is one of the mightiest prophets of God, but a prophet nonetheless.

Readers are requested to go through the Gospel of Barnabas to gain a better insight into Christianity. Also read about the Council of Nicaea.

The Qur'an has been authored by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

The Qur'an is a compilation of ayaat which deal with so many diverse disciplines like history, law, politics, diplomacy, economics, spirituality, sociology, psychology, physiology, embryology, entomology, geology, cosmology and oceanology that it is impossible for any human being to author it, let alone Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who was born and brought up in 6th Century Arabia and had never received any formal education. He could not even read and write. Expecting him to study so many subjects and then to author such a perfect and eloquent book is beyond reason. Moreover, the scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an 1500 years back have only recently been discovered by scientists, making it all the more evident that the Qur'an could not have been authored by a man who lived in the 6th Century CE. There is not a single ayat of the Qur'an which has yet been proven wrong or factually incorrect. Such a book can only be revealed by God Almighty.

All religions lead to God

A dai arranges seminars, holds inter-religious talks and exhausts all his energies to explain Tauheed, Risalat and Akhirat. But all his efforts turn futile when members of the audience come up on stage and say, "Islam is good, so is our religion. All religions, after all, are the same; they all lead to God."

All religions are not the same:

One religion says that there is only one God. Another says there are three- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet another claims there are millions of gods. A fourth claims that there is no God at all.

One religion believes in prophets and messengers who were human beings, appointed by God to guide mankind. Another believes that God sent His only begotten son on earth to expatiate for the sins of mankind. Yet another says that God himself took the form of a human being and was born on earth as an avatar to human parents.

One religion says that all human beings would be raised up on the Day of Judgment and would have to account for their deeds before God, after which they would be sent to heaven or hell. Another believes that Jesus Christ has already died on the cross for the sins of mankind, and everyone who believes Christ is his saviour would enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet another says that man has to go through several cycles of rebirth before he can attain salvation. A fourth claims that every person can attain Nirvana by being a good human being, and that there is no such thing as heaven or hell.

How can all these religions be the same? ONLY ONE of them can ever be true.

All ways do not lead to God:

Only one way can lead to God, and that is the way that God has Himself taught human beings through the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Suppose a man wishes to go to Delhi and also has a valid ticket. He reaches Dadar station to board his train. But would all trains take him to Delhi? One platform would take him to CST, another to Kalyan, another to Churchgate and a fourth to Virar. One platform would take him to Delhi, another to Chennai and yet another to Kolkata. It is very important for him to not only have an intention to reach Delhi and put in efforts for the same, it is also equally important to reach the correct platform at the right time and board the right train. We are here to show him the direction to the right path that would lead him to God; whether he heeds our call and takes the right train or ignores our call and takes the wrong one is entirely up to him.